

A LIFE FOR EDUCATION

an autobiography



LEAH MANNING

Leah Manning was one of the most colourful personalities in Left Wing politics in the thirties; and she was twice a member of Parliament, in the Labour government of 1929-31, and again from 1945-50; she has always been very active in her union, the N.U.T., working in its Central office for many years, and serving as President. She is still in harness, at the age of 84, teaching in a girls' school.

She writes charmingly of her childhood, when she lived with highly enlightened grandparents. She had little formal schooling but won a place at a Cambridge teaching college where she was drawn into the Fabian Society by a young man named Hugh Dalton. The terms of her scholarship took her on into teaching. Slum schools taught her the meaning of poverty; the First World War served to emphasise the wickedness of capitalism; the Russian Revolution was a beacon; the 1918 General Election was her first big battle. Through the twenties she became active in the N.U.T. and in 1928 won a place on its panel of parliamentary candidates. Then the promise of a very safe seat, Bristol East, was broken: Transport House suddenly wanted that seat to get Stafford Cripps into the House. Instead, East Islington was offered to her in a by-election: a somewhat marginal seat, but she won it handsomely, only to lose it again a year later, in the 1931 debacle which saw the formation of the "National" Government. Throughout the Spanish Civil War she ardently championed the Republican cause and fought against the policy of "Non-Intervention": her *What I Saw in Spain* was published by the Left Book Club. During the Second World War she had a roving N.U.T. commission which kept her travelling to schools in every part of England. Then came the 1945 General Election

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when, like so many other Labour candidates of seemingly hopeless constituencies (hers was Epping), she found herself at the top of the poll. Five more years in Parliament, years of achievement and also of some disillusionment. And since 1950, back to teaching, apart from a three-year interlude as Personnel Manager at a Harlow factory.

She has many forceful comments to make on her contemporaries, and many fascinating anecdotes, too. Her book is full of variety and incident, and she is still, as she was at eighteen, warmly and impulsively idealistic, a passionate fighter for the underprivileged and a militant Left-winger, full of mental and physical stamina. It is a book that will be warmly welcomed by all who are interested in the political life of the last fifty years, as well as by the wide public that now pays especial attention to the thirties, and by the teaching profession.

A LIFE FOR EDUCATION

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

by

LEAH MANNING

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To
The Right Honourable
Barbara Castle, M.P.
In affectionate admiration

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Acknowledgement

Of the material quoted in this book, all press reports are from the *News Chronicle*, and other Parliamentary speeches are from Hansard. I have also quoted briefly from two volumes of Hugh Dalton's memoirs, *The Fateful Years* (London, Muller, 1957) and *High Tide and After* (London, Muller, 1962), and from Churchill's *The Gathering Storm* (Cassell). The prayer on page 255 is from *Prayers of Life* by Michael Quoist, translated by Anne Marie de Connaille and Agnes Mitchell Forsyth (Dublin, Gill and Macmillan, 1963). I should like to express my gratitude to all those who have kindly allowed me to quote from personal correspondence.

L.M.

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PART ONE

I

Victorian Childhood

MY EARLY CHILDHOOD was somewhat disconcerting, for it was neatly chopped into two pieces. The first part, as I recollect, was a jumble of delight: long hot summers with holidays by the sea and long snowy winters, culminating in all the excitement of Christmas. The classic Victorian family, where the tail of one generation overlapped the beginnings of the next, provided me with brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts, nephews and nieces galore. In the matchbox houses of today this might prove a difficulty, but in the comfortable, roomy old houses of the nineteenth century there was no over-crowding and we children lacked nothing in material comfort of any kind.

When I was about five or six, a great change took place in our family circumstances. Child as I was, I recognised the storm signals: family conferences, tears, even hysteria. It gradually dawned upon me that the cause of this turbulence centred upon my adored grandfather. He had been a widower for many years, but now had the temerity to re-marry, a sweet and lovely lady, a widow with one son. My two aunts, Elizabeth and Susan, took themselves off in high dudgeon with their husbands and families, part of the fashionable emigration of the late nineteenth century. They departed to Australia and New Zealand. Their glowing letters of life in the new lands probably infected my parents, or perhaps my mother, Harriet, the youngest of the three, was lonely without them. It was not long before preparations were afoot to take us all to Canada, an obvious choice since my grandfather was a timber merchant; my father and my three uncles were all employed in the business with him. One of my earliest delights was to go with my father to estimate the value of standing timber about to be sacrificed on some impoverished estate. For me it was just a lovely day in the country, riding with my father in our old buggy; I never understood that for someone it might mean anguish and heartbreak.

However, Canada was timber country and there my father's expertise would be invaluable in helping him to settle quickly into a profitable business.

To my grandfather, this was all a bitter blow. He had loved his daughters deeply. Now he had lost them all. Above my childish head a bargain was struck. I was to stay behind with my grandfather and my new grandmamma. My two elder brothers and the little ones were to go to Canada with my parents. This might seem a catastrophe in the life of a child. It was really nothing of the kind. In the first place it was not unusual, in those long Victorian families, for one child to live with the grandparents; even more important, I loved the idea of being the petted youngest member of a family of grown-ups, rather than the eldest daughter of a rumbustious brood whose intake was one per annum. Although the uncles were young men, David, their step-brother was only a few years older than me, and my dearly-loved friend and companion.

Also, to me, my grandfather was as God.

Our family had been Huguenot emigrés, silk merchants in Lyon who, when they fled to England, had settled in Spitalfields to carry on the family business, but on a much more humble scale. By my great-grandmother's time they were respected silk weavers. At the age of eighteen she had married, within their tight little community, another silk weaver, William Tappin. My grandfather George was their eldest son. George Tappin was a most remarkable man, but he was the son of an even more remarkable woman. I was brought up on the legend of Great-grandmamma Tappin, someone by whom all standards of conduct were set. She died before I was born, but I cherish a deep admiration and affection for her memory. And why not? She was a 'Royal Personage', at least she is so described in the little biography of her life and work which I treasure. It is entitled simply *The King's Daughter*, for so she was known in her day and generation by thousands of the poor, the wretched and the outcast in the East End of London.

Under a tiny, frilled bonnet, her portrait, which is the frontispiece of the little book, shows a face of serene goodness but great determination. Yet throughout her life she always declared that she had been a great sinner and sought Divine forgiveness for that part of her life which she felt had been misspent.

"That was her deep humility," my grandfather would say. "She was a wonderful mother to us boys, seeing that we received an education far beyond that of our young friends and paying for it herself, out of her frugal earnings as a silk weaver. She made us talk and read and think, but it was all within our family circle and it was years before she gave any thought to the people beyond her threshold, living in sin and poverty and with no one to show them a loving or guiding hand. When God revealed his purpose to her she made up a thousandfold for her previous indifference."

It would seem that, like Saul of Tarsus, she was stopped in her tracks by a great light—no more and no less than that. She was stepping out of her house one Sunday morning, taking her family to Tottenham Hale for a picnic, when in her own words, "I was convicted of sin". From that day there was no turning back for my great-grandmother. Her biographer says of her, "Susan Tappin was one of the greatest women this generation has produced. She did more to relieve the suffering of the outcast of London than any other person I have ever known. Though in a sphere that was more humble and obscure, she was as truly a ministering angel as Florence Nightingale or Elizabeth Fry."

Those were days of great spiritual power, revivalism and missionary work in the East End of London. My great-grandmother joined Cooper's Gardens Primitive Methodist Society and soon became one of their most zealous honorary workers.

"Why was she called 'The King's Daughter'?" I once asked my grandfather. "Was she really a princess?" This is the story he told me, one I never tired of hearing:

She was offering a tract to a man on the street. He grew angry, no doubt because of her persistence.

"Don't pester me with your damned tracts," he shouted.

Not in the least disconcerted, Susan drew herself up to her full four foot two inches in height and demanded, "How dare you speak to me like that, d'you know who I am?"

Very much taken aback, the man said, "Well who the hell are you, how d'you expect me to know."

With all the dignity of royalty itself, she said impressively, "I am the King's daughter".

Her reply seems to have paid off, for my grandfather related that the man took the tract, apologised and promised to read it.

Finding her rejoinder so effective, she used it on other occasions until it became common currency among a wider and wider circle who used it with amused affection. My grandfather would always add that among the poorest and most ignorant with whom she worked, the title seemed indistinguishable from that of Princess Louise or any other of the royal ladies. That she really felt herself, in some special way, to be the daughter of the King of Kings and a member of the Royal Family of Heaven is undoubted.

It was this inner assurance that gave grace and dignity to all her ministrations. She became a kind of almoner for many wealthy and influential people, who preferred to let their charity pass through her hands rather than through an organisation. She not only knew where the greatest need existed, but she was a shrewd bargainer when it came to buying food and clothing for her second family. She had contracts with the butcher, the baker and the second-hand clothes dealer and she had a way with her. "Now it's not for me, it's for the Lord's poor," she would say. "He's sure to make it up to you; he who giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord." She must have been an unconscious Socialist; when she was begging, she was no respecter of persons. "Now come along, open up that pocket, no one ought to be in want while you have enough and to spare", would draw donations from the most reluctant.

She was absolutely without fear of sickness and infection and would nurse cases of smallpox and cholera that no one else would go near. "I wonder if we could get Mrs Tappin," a desperate doctor would ask. "Lord bless my soul," was her ever ready reply, "for surely He will deliver me from the snare of the fowler and the noisome pestilence." She had the faith of a child.

She was not a trained midwife, but she delivered hundreds of destitute women who had no other means of obtaining help. One of her friends had ten children. My great-grandmother brought them all into the world, for the poor woman would have no one else near her. Many of the hovels in which she performed her errands of mercy had no convenience for washing and Susan might often be seen at night, struggling home with a great bundle of washing, which she would do in her own home after her family had gone to bed.

In such a rough society, her bluntness and persistence in offer-

ing tracts and enquiring after people's souls often got her into difficulties, but there was always someone to rush to her defence. Particularly she seems to have had many friends among cabbies, policemen and publicans. My grandfather once went to meet her coming home from her evening rounds. Passing the corner of Shoreditch Church, he saw a crowd outside the pub which was to be their rendezvous. In the centre of the crowd was his mother. An evil-looking man was threatening her and the publican with his sleeves rolled up was shouting the odds. "She's a good old woman," he was roaring, "and I only wish I was 'arf as good; if you lays a finger on her, I'll soon give yer a pair of ma'ogany spectacles. She comes 'ere wiv 'er tracks w'enever she likes."

Much as she was loved, to many people, especially as she grew older, she seemed an eccentric. She was completely uninhibited in her praises at Cooper's Fields and Shoreditch Tabernacle and had a disconcerting habit of shouting aloud her own observations. For a young Minister who she thought needed encouragement, she prayed aloud as he mounted the pulpit steps, "God bless the young Timothy".

Her biographer says, "As she sat in her side pew, with closed eyes and beaming smile, devoutly intent, she would often break forth into a positive paean of thanksgiving, which sent a thrill through the whole congregation." I think no epitaph could better describe my great-grandmother than the simple inscription carved on her tombstone, "She went about doing good". I once went to try to find some trace of it in the old churchyard in Shoreditch. But it had vanished with the years—only the fragrance of her good, simple life remains with me.

Such then was the influence that shaped my grandfather's life. He bore the stamp and image of his mother, both in appearance and character; the same serene face and candid eyes; the same trace of obstinacy about the mouth; but whilst Susan Tappin was short and dumpy, her son was tall and portly, with a wonderful, red, carefully trimmed beard and red wavy hair. I don't know anything about his first wife, who was my real grandmother, but in the front parlour there was a soft water-colour of her, entwined with her three daughters. This portrait intrigued me greatly. My own clothes were prim, my hair, pulled straight back from my bulging forehead, hung in two thick

ginger plaits past my waist—indeed I bore a strong resemblance to a Tenniel drawing of Alice. But the aunts and my mother had fringes; their hair curled softly on their shoulders and they showed a good deal of bosom. I once ventured to ask Emma, a distant and indigent relative who lived with us, an impertinent question. “Why can’t I have pretty clothes like my aunts?”

Emma looked sourly at the lovely picture.

“Worldly Madam was. Broke your grandpappa’s heart always nagging him about that French fortune.”

I was shocked. The French fortune was a family joke about mythical thousands we were supposed to have left in France when we fled to England, but which somehow or other had got itself incarcerated in something called ‘Chancery’. It was good fun on cold winter evenings to work out how much it would have amounted to at compound interest over the years. Not that I was any good at such mathematical adventures. I was a complete fool with any kind of figures and still am to this day. But I watched with fascinated interest how David, my adored youngest uncle, manipulated them to our great advantage. That ‘Madam’ should have taken it seriously and worried my grandfather about it, severely lowered my opinion of her as a very clever lady—perhaps a cut above the rest of us. I had no desire to be worldly, and this was my last spurt of rebellion about my appearance for many years, for I would never willingly have done anything that would have hurt or disappointed my grandfather.

The three older uncles lived at home. They all had ‘young ladies’, and I looked forward with lively interest to the time when I would be a bridesmaid at their weddings; but they didn’t seem in a hurry to leave. Indeed, too much haste would have been thought bad taste and improvident. It was the custom to have sufficient money in the bank to buy one’s own house, and to set up housekeeping with at least one maid living in. There was a fourth uncle—Joe, but he was never mentioned. All I could ever glean about him was that he was ‘sinful’.

“Would he be a prodigal son?” I asked Emma.

“I don’t want to talk about him,” she replied, very tart.

“Do you think he’s in a far country?” I persisted. “Perhaps he’s ill or hungry.”

“More likely living on the fat of the land, with one of his sisters—now that’s enough about your uncle Joe, I don’t want

to hear his name mentioned again." And with that sharp rejoinder I had to be satisfied, but he always remained in my mind a romantic figure, quite unlike his worthy brothers.

David, the Benjamin of our family, was the son of my grand-mamma by her first marriage. He was the idol of my young life and still a schoolboy. How he could have put up with me, always tagging along behind him, I do not know. If I bored him, he never showed it. Sunny-tempered, affectionate and intelligent, the promise of his youth was not destined to blossom into manhood.

I do not remember that anyone ever taught me to read, and I did not go to school until I was eight or nine, but grandmamma kept me plentifully supplied with books. These were the books of her own childhood, and I can see them now in a row on a little shelf in my bedroom: *Christy's Old Organ*, *The Basket of Flowers*, *Jessica's First Prayer*, followed by the 'Elsie Dinsmore' books, *What Katy Did*, *The Fairchild Family*, *Queechy*, *The Wide Wide World*. These books with their strong moral lessons were required reading for little Victorian girls and I can't pretend I didn't enjoy them, but to David they were anathema.

"They're terrible, Ma," he would say teasingly, and every Saturday bring me a little pink paperback, one of the 'Books for the Bairns', published by W. T. Stead. I think they cost a penny, and for me they were a bottomless well of enchantment. I kept that little bundle of paperbacks for many years; took them in the bottom of my trunk when I went to college and lent them to the children in the play centre I opened in my first post until, tattered, torn and dog-eared, they finally disappeared along with my childhood's dreams.

Under David's stern admonition not to read rubbish, I had read twice all my favourite Scott and Dickens before I was ten. "Our little bookworm", grandpappa called me. Only Emma disapproved. "You can't dust properly with a book stuck in your hand, besides you'll ruin your eyesight," she scolded. I stared at her, frightened. "D'you mean I'll get eyes like Mrs Doran?" I quavered.

Mrs Doran was our Irish washerwoman. She came every Monday and filled the scullery with steam, then hung line after line of soft woollens, whites and coloureds, to blow in the big garden behind our house. Sometimes she let me turn the handle of the big box mangle, but I always kept my eyes averted if I

could do so, without seeming to be rude. She had lint-white hair and pinkish eyes, which moved incessantly from corner to corner. Better never read another book in all my life than have eyes like Mrs Doran.

"What's the matter with Elizabeth?" asked David, coming one morning into the parlour, where I had been trying to combine reading with the task of dusting.

"Emma says I'll get eyes like Mrs Doran if I read so much," I faltered.

"Don't be such a goose," he laughed reassuringly. "Old Doran was born that way. Look here, I'll give you a little white rabbit with pink eyes."

"No," I screamed. "I don't want one." I never, ever went into the kitchen again on wash days. And I gave up reading in bed by the glimmer of the night-light that stood in its saucer of water by my bedside, to keep me company. This much concession I made to my fears.

We lived in one of those comfortable old Victorian houses in the neighbourhood of Stamford Hill—actually 'Hillside', Osbaldestone Road. The room I remember best was the cosy, sitting-cum-dining room, which we called the back parlour. It opened on to a big conservatory with a grapevine—where grand-mamma grew her potted plants—then down steps into the garden. I don't remember any flowers growing there, only a spacious lawn with a great walnut tree, under which David had rigged up a swing for me. Emma and I picked up the green walnuts, pricked them all over, put them on trays to dry, then made lovely jars of pickles with them.

The back parlour was separated from the front parlour by folding doors, which could be pushed back to make one enormous room when we had parties, and always on Sunday evenings, when guests came back for an evening meal. I never heard the words 'drawing-room' or 'lounge' when I was a child. Perhaps they were not in common use in middle-class families. If my grandfather wished to withdraw with business associates, they went to his little study, which was up a short flight of stairs from the hall.

A long flight of steps led to the front door. This was used by the family and their friends. Tradesmen and other callers went down the area steps. Every morning, before we were up, the step-woman came, a great coarse apron tied round her waist

and a man's flat cap on her head. I sometimes watched her out of my bedroom window, with her clanking pails, as she whitened the steps and polished the brass letter-box, knocker and bell. Then Emma would emerge from the area steps, with a steaming cup of cocoa, some door-steps of bread and dripping and sixpence. I thought it terribly mean of Emma not to ask the step-woman to eat her breakfast in the kitchen.

"Why don't you ask the step-woman into the kitchen to drink her cocoa?" I asked pertly.

"Ask no questions and you'll be told no lies," Emma returned.

"No! but why don't you?" I persisted.

Emma glared. "D'you want nits in your head again?"

That shut me up. No one ever understood the reason for this disgrace, although it was quite easy to explain. Attached to our chapel was a mission school. None of the children of our friends attended. "All the more reason why we should set an example," my grandfather insisted and, in spite of my grandmother's reluctance, to the mission school I went, and to the summer treat at Theydon Bois. Coming home in the brake, I took a very sleepy girl in my arms and let her snuggle down. The next day my head itched terribly.

The memory of Emma dragging that awful steel comb through my long hair and the smell of paraffin, which lingered on and on, still horrifies me. Only Emma enjoyed it. Whilst she pretended to be disgusted, I knew that in her heart she loved both my humiliation and the fact that she had me at her mercy. Emma was a sadist. She was at once my scourge and my confederate. If she caught me prinking in front of the glass, trying to fluff out my hair a little, she would yank my plaits and call me Miss Vain. One day my grandmamma intervened. "I don't know, Emma, I rather like little girls to have a touch of vanity. We'll get her a comb, then she can push her hair forward a bit. I don't really like it strained back so tightly."

I loved my comb. Worn pushed in my hair from ear to ear, I could manipulate it to soften my naked, bulgy forehead, or I could push it back tight, when I went to spend an hour with Emma in the kitchen. When she had spasms of friendliness I could depend on the most delectable tit-bits—hot buttered muffins, straight from the man who came ringing his bell down our area steps, his great tray covered with a green baize cloth, on his head; better still the golden crust of a newly-baked loaf, spread

with beef dripping, rich with gravy from the big joints, roasted every day to satisfy the appetites of four men.

We had a guilty secret. Every Wednesday my grandparents went to 'class', an essential part of Wesleyan Methodist worship. Then Emma and I would run to the end of our road to buy roasted potatoes or a bag of hot chestnuts from the vendors who stood there with little stoves. Nothing cooked at home could vie with these delicacies, so sinfully acquired.

What an extraordinary mixture my grandfather was! Like his mother, he was deeply religious; yet to him, Methodism and Radicalism were one and the same thing. At family prayers, which he conducted every morning, he would, during an Election, pray fervently for Liberal victories at West Ham, Wigan or Wolverhampton, or any place where the battle was raging that day. As soon as the results were announced he would rush to his study and stick flags in a large map of constituencies which covered the whole of one wall. Liberal victories were the direct answer to prayers and deepened his belief in their efficacy. We had pictures of Gladstone in every room in the house, from an oil painting in a gilt frame in the front parlour, to the current calendar in the W.C. These my grandfather had privately printed every year to give to his business acquaintances.

I suppose if he were living today he would be a member of the Labour Party. I'm equally sure that Transport House would find a dozen reasons for expelling him. Discussions went on endlessly in our family, always in the cosy back parlour between the hours of tea and supper: the rights and wrongs of Charles Bradlaugh; the vicious sentence on Oscar Wilde; the queer ideas of Mrs Besant; Mormon missionaries and the white slave traffic; General Booth and Mrs Josephine Butler; Dr Campbell and the immanence of God; above all, the iniquity of the Boer War. I would sit quiet as a mouse, only very occasionally catching the drift of the meaning, yet with the names of the people under discussion indelibly impressed on my memory, and a determination to find out all about them when I could read some of the books on my grandfather's shelves.

One thing interested me greatly. There was this Mrs Besant who thought every lady should carry in her muff something—but I wasn't sure what. I was interested, because I had a little muff, made out of a piece of grandmamma's sealskin dolmin

when it had been remodelled. Why couldn't I carry this precious thing which made life so exciting?

I ventured a question.

Grandmamma's face went very red then very white.

"Little girls should be like pictures, seen and not heard," said my grandfather. Ever after that, when a discussion seemed on the point of becoming interesting, someone would say, "Little pitchers have long ears." How many thousands of small girls must have had those famous Victorian aphorisms quoted at them.

Now when I can dredge up memories of those long ago discussions, I reach the conclusion that my grandfather's opinions were far ahead of his time and that he found it right and proper to argue out with his sons the pros and cons of all the new ideas which were burgeoning in the late nineteenth century, and in which as young men they were interested, rather than quashing their right to think for themselves. But it was just this, and his ardent support of the Boers in the Boer War, that brought the first tragedy into our happy family.

Although his social and political views were broad, his religion was entirely fundamental. He believed in a personal God and a personal devil. Although my own view of God was reduced to the all-seeing eye that hung on my bedroom wall, emblazoned with the text, 'Thou God Seest Me', I had an exact and authentic picture of the devil, gleaned from *Pilgrim's Progress* and Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, the only profane literature I was allowed to read on a Sunday—hoofs, horns and a trident for poking people down into hell fire. He gave me a delicious thrill of terror and in a way became a kind of friend. Whenever Emma was extra horrid, I would gloat over a mental picture of the devil prodding her down with his trident into the everlasting bonfire. I feel his presence much more alarmingly today: the terrifying pride and arrogance which flung Lucifer headlong from the heavens strides the earth again with super-human power to hurl us all into the abyss on the pressure of a button.

My grandmamma always told her friends that I was a bid-dable child, yet I had occasional fits of quite inexplicable and unpredictable naughtiness. "Following the band," David called these lapses, for I had a compulsive habit of wandering. Circuses, German bands, organ grinders with their monkeys, above all funerals. Funerals were something in those days. The hearse and

mourning carriages were drawn by high-stepping horses, with long flowing manes and tails. Across their backs were splendid cloths of caracul, fringed and braided, and on their heads were sable plumes. The drivers of these cavalcades wore stove-pipe hats tied around with black crepe called 'weepers'. They really were much more splendid and exciting than the circuses.

We lived near Abney Park Cemetery. Reverently I would walk slowly on the pavement, beside the cortege, making my way unobtrusively to the graveside, behind the last carriage. I was not emotionally involved with the mourners, shedding their tears into black-bordered handkerchiefs. It was the dead, being lowered into the black earth, about whom I had an overwhelming curiosity. I had been taught that on the Judgment Day they would rise uncorrupted, either to enter into the glory of the Lord, or to be cast into hell fire to burn everlastingly. I had once experimented with a pet kitten which had died and been buried with full rites under our walnut tree. A week later I dug it up. It certainly wasn't uncorrupted.

There must be a catch in it somewhere, I thought. Judgment Days became my worst nightmares. At last I summoned up courage to ask David.

"When people are buried, do worms eat them and do they crumble to dust?"

"Don't worry your head about such things, Elizabeth," he said coaxingly.

"But I want to know," I persisted. He tried to help me.

"It's only our mortal remains that suffer corruption, chicken," he said. "It's our spirits that will stand before God, to be judged, so if you want to be a cherub, you must be a good girl and keep from worrying grandmamma."

I digested this information for a few minutes, then said, "I don't think that's what grandpappa believes."

"You asked me and that's what I believe," he answered a little shortly,

I waited again a few minutes, then I said a little timidly, "David, are you an atheist?"

My uncle stood stock still in the middle of Hackney Downs, looking very worried. "Where did you get that word?" he demanded. I was at the point of tears, but I held my ground.

"Emma said it," I answered.

"When?" David demanded.

"I took a book off grandpa's shelf. It was written by a gentleman called Mr Paine. Emma snatched it away from me and said he was an atheist and didn't believe in God or the Bible."

"Look, Elizabeth," David said very gently. "There are many things it's very difficult for a little girl to understand, but they will be much clearer as you grow older. Tom Paine may not think about some things in the same way as we do, but one day you will read that book from grandpa's shelf and you will find out for yourself that he was a very great man." It was many years before I read *The Rights of Man* and understood what David meant, but just then I felt it was all very unsatisfactory, and that some great truth was being hidden from me. Divided counsels are not good for small and thoughtful children.

Not all my wanderings were so macabre, or all my questions so dreadfully solemn. One gay adventure stands out in my memory, because it led to my telling my first conscious lie. No doubt, like most small girls, I fibbed occasionally but a direct, made-up lie to get myself out of a tight corner, I don't ever remember until the day I followed the organ grinder. Joyfully I skipped away behind him; away from our nice respectable neighbourhood and into the jungle of little back streets, where children played all day on the pavements. The hurdy-gurdy man was greeted with whoops of joy and in a few seconds little girls were whirling madly in the road, tattered petticoats and tangled curls flying joyously. I stood by the railings, my feet itching, jiggling up and down in time to the music.

"Come on little gel, you can jine in," screamed one of the maenads. I looked doubtfully at my high-buttoned boots.

"Tike 'em orf," she shouted.

In a trance I did as I was told and lost to all sense of shame was immediately whirling with the others in the road. One tune; two tunes; three tunes; then his repertoire was finished and the hurdy-gurdy man moved off to another street, followed by a rowdy mob of children.

I went to put on my boots. They had vanished. So had the children.

Slum kids, I thought bitterly with deep class consciousness. Emma was right. They were a set of thieving rascallions. It had all been a trick to rob me of my lovely high-buttoned boots. But what was I to do? I didn't mind the bare-footed walk home, but how explain the lost boots? for I was not very inventive.

I went into Clissold Park, where I was allowed to take walks. I sat on a bench and tried to think. After a few minutes a poorly-clad woman with a little girl came and sat beside me. In an instant, my friend the devil planted a ready-made lie in my mind. Moreover it was a lie which might bring me kudos as well.

I made my way home. Grandmamma was watching anxiously from the window. She rushed to the door. Horrified she looked at my feet. "Where are your boots, Elizabeth?" she asked.

Without turning a hair, I said, "I gave them to a poor little girl who didn't have any." Then seeing Emma's cold, inimical eye, where she stood on the stairs behind my grandmother, I faltered, "Like it says in the Bible." I knew Emma didn't believe a word of my tale, but grandma was already on her knees taking off my stockings, looking for blisters. "Go and fetch a pair of clean stockings and her low black lace-ups, Emma," she ordered.

Smirking, Emma stomped upstairs. Whatever she guessed, she would be a thousand miles from the truth. But her triumph over a lying child was bright in her eye, as she came back carrying the despised lace-ups. But for Emma, I might have found the courage to confess my lie to grandmamma. As it was I suffered agonies of remorse trying to push the sin away out of my consciousness. In the end I rationalised the lie, without knowing I was doing so. Presently I began to believe that what I had said was true. Certainly some poor little slum shoeless child was wearing my boots—perhaps the one who had tempted me to dance in the road. So I hadn't strayed so far from the truth after all. I was much comforted.

If the child is father to the man, then my love of 'following the band' re-asserted itself in full force in adult life. I never could resist a procession or a demo—May Day, Votes for Women, Hands off Russia, Anti-fascists mobs, Ban the bomb, 'Avions pour Espagne' in Paris; even, finding myself in a low part of Marseilles, I was involved in a Saccho and Vanzetti riot, which landed me in a French jail from which I had to be rescued by the British Consul.

I resent the fact that I can no longer indulge my obsession; there are so many things for which one should march and demonstrate today.

II

Edwardian Adolescence

AT LENGTH MY grandmother decided that the only way to end my wanderlust was to send me to school. So off I went to the Misses Thorn's Select Academy for Young Ladies. The only things I can remember being taught there were to play 'The Blue Bells of Scotland' on the piano, to paint a few flowers and work a sampler. As I was a most inadequate pupil in all these artistic endeavours, I knew quite well that my education would have progressed much more satisfactorily if I had been left at home to read in peace, an argument constantly reinforced by David.

But I was still very childish, still believed in the Judgment Day and eternal damnation; nevertheless I had many wicked unresolved doubts about life, death and eternity. I only choose the age of eleven or twelve to announce myself a teenager because, from being a child, I suddenly became a young girl. A terrible tragedy entered our family life. Its traumatic effect was to open my mind; to make me receptive to new influences and new ideas; to make me struggle to think for myself. For David had vanished forever from my young life and this was his bequest to me.

It was my grandfather's ardent support for the Boers that brought this agonising experience to all of us. The elder uncles shared my grandfather's views, although it was not a matter of principle with them. The war was bad for business; people did not pay their debts; and the thinning of parklands in ancestral grounds, always their professional delight, was falling off. Probably sons and heirs were away at the war and decisions couldn't be taken without their permission. But on David, these unpatriotic views of his father bore hardly.

Nearly eighteen, he was still at school. He had taken his 'inter' and was going to Cambridge in the fall. He was sunny-tempered and had always been popular among his friends. To

hear his father called a traitor, especially when the taunts came from his school-fellows, cut him deeply. One day, strapping up his books, he called to me to walk a little way to school with him—something I loved to do, even though it meant being late at Miss Thorn's establishment. On Hackney Downs he stopped and gave me a letter. "Tuck it in your knickers," he said, "and give it to grandmamma when she hears your prayers tonight." I had been taught not to argue or ask unnecessary questions of my elders so I did as David told me. He stooped and kissed me, a strange thing for we did not go in much for kissing in our family. Something unaccountable swelled up inside me. Tears pricked in my eyes. I stood and watched him until he was out of sight—a small girl watching a tall young man.

I never saw him again.

The commotion in our family was terrible when his letter, explaining why he had joined the C.I.V.s, was read. It would not have been difficult for my grandfather to get him out of the army, for he was under age and had only secured his enlistment by making a false declaration. To all my grandmother's tears and pleas he only replied, "The lad's views are his own, he has as much right to them as I have to mine". This may seem a strange view for a Victorian father to take; but George Tappin would have been unique in any generation. Naturally my poor grandmamma looked at things quite differently. It was the only fly in the amber of their happy married life; the only difference of opinion that ever disturbed their serenity.

An incident in the Boer War gave me the greatest fright of my young life; a night which began in tears and terror and ended in smiles and happiness. I was awakened by a violent commotion of noise and shouting in the street, and on the walls of my small bedroom the shadows of leaping flames. All my old nightmare terrors came back; this was the Judgment Day. The thought of all those shrouded horrors rising from their graves in Abney Park Cemetery overwhelmed me. I screamed for my grandmother. When she came to my room I was not surprised to see that she was dressed in her Sabbath clothes—the neat bonnet trimmed with bugles, the spotted veil, the small sealskin dolmin and the genteel black kid gloves. Her face was radiant. This was all in order; it was how I would have expected her to meet her Maker.

She held out her arms to me. "Were you frightened, my pet?"

I dared not ask the question that trembled on my lips. "The people shouting and the great fire," I quavered.

She laughed tremulously and now I saw there were tears in her eyes. "Everybody's so glad, so thankful, they're so happy, they're celebrating in the streets."

Enlightenment dawned on me. "Mafeking! Uncle David's siege?" I asked eagerly.

"Yes, Elizabeth, and perhaps Uncle David will come home soon now," she said in tones of deep gratitude.

I conjured up pictures of David and his comrades blowing their trumpets and the walls of the city whose name had been on our lips for so long now collapsing. "I hope all the wicked old Boers in the city were killed," I said vindictively.

My grandmother looked very grieved at my outburst.

"Hush, child," she said. "Don't ever let your grandfather hear you say such a thing. He would be very angry. He doesn't think the Boers are wicked and neither must you—indeed some of the things we have done ourselves in this war have been wicked and must have grieved God."

Our happy anticipation on Mafeking night was never fulfilled. Somewhere David's bones whitened on the veldt; he met his death at the hands of an enemy his father had supported.

When I knew the truth, I took the little button of 'Bobs', which I used to secrete in my satchel, only pinning it on my dress when I got to school, and ground it under my foot.

I had taken my first step towards pacifism.

It was a long time before I accepted the reality of David's death. When the C.I.V.s came home I stayed away from school and went into the city. Eagerly, hopefully, I scanned every face. But I knew it was no good. I could not shed any tears, only feel a grinding misery in my heart, quite unlike the feeling of a child, but the beginning of adolescent emotion. It took me many years to recognise that the exquisite tenderness which had developed towards David during his absence in South Africa was the dawning of first love and that I should never feel anything like it again. The fact that we had grown up together made no difference to the fact. There was no consanguinity—we shared neither of our parents.

I had now been for some time at a real school and this helped me to overcome a measure of my unhappiness, for I knew I was

doing what David would have approved. I was fortunate in having an English mistress who brought Shakespeare alive. For the first time I realised that the stories in which I had revelled for so long were plays, theatre stuff, made to be acted, not just read aloud. One day when we were rehearsing *Twelfth Night* for the school speech day, a gentleman walked into our form room. He signed for us to go on then sat down at the table and listened until the period was over. As we were filing out, my form mistress called me back. "Wait a minute, Elizabeth, Mr Headlam would like to talk to you." I don't know if there are any London teachers still living who remember that great gentleman, The Rev. Stewart Headlam. I certainly did not guess then that he was to shape and influence my life and that the economic and political thinking to which he introduced me as a girl would eventually lead me to the House of Commons.

He was not only a great educationist, he was a kind and generous person. I remember as if it were yesterday my visits to his home at St Margaret's to see Mr Poel's Elizabethan-type productions of Shakespeare; and the wonderful Shakespeare garden—every herb and flower mentioned in plays and sonnets growing there with the quotation neatly enclosed in a little case. It was he who took me to see my first play, an unforgettable experience, for I had never been inside a theatre before. To my grandfather the theatre was the devil's playground and stage people the very sons and daughters of Beelzebub. Mr Headlam thought it a harmless deception to take me to a *matinée*. Indeed if he thought about it at all, it was that I was being denied something which was my cultural heritage, by kindly but misguided people who did not understand my adolescent needs.

Like Charles Lamb, I found my first play 'all a dream and an enchantment'. I didn't know at all what to expect, and I recollect the first thing which astonished me was to step in out of the bright afternoon sunshine and find a house brightly lighted with artificial light—and when those lights went down I was breathless with anticipation. My eyes never wavered from the heroic figures on the stage; nor did my ears miss one of the well-known, well-loved words. My tears rolled unchecked for the hapless Ophelia and I could hardly retain my seat during the 'play scene'; and when the curtain went down for the last time it seemed to me that the real world was there behind it.

I tried to thank Mr Headlam. He said, "When one reaches

my age, there are not so many things left one can do for the first time; then one derives great pleasure from watching the first experiences of the young."

The year that followed was a very strange one for me. I had matriculated but was a year too young to enter college, so, with Mr Headlam's help, I found a post in a boys' school at Old-field Road. I was quite inexperienced and still remember with gratitude the kindness of the headmaster, Mr Ball, and his son, Gus, to a young, very nervous girl—one girl among a score of men and several hundred boys.

But I was earning a little money and wanted so badly to spend some of it in extending my acquaintance with the theatre. At first my grandparents were shocked and alarmed. They saw me skipping gaily down the primrose path to hell—the everlasting bonfire in which they believed implicitly. Until then I had been a good child, except for my early proclivity to 'follow the band', and had never given them a moment's anxiety. So after long and anxious discussion with our Minister and, I am sure, much prayer for guidance, a compromise was reached. Provided I did not miss our week-night service or choir practice, I might spend some of my money on theatre-going. In that year before I went to college, I made great use of the privilege my grandparents had accorded me. I became a real London galleryite, standing happily in queues, munching my apples and sandwiches; listening entranced to the buskers and making a dash for the long stone stairways as soon as the doors were opened. Some first loves fade and die. Not mine. Throughout my life and in many countries the thrill of going to the theatre has never palled.

But going to the theatre was not the only enrichment of my adolescence. My first symphony concert came about quite accidentally. While still at school I was expecting to go to university to read History and English. I had a girlish crush on our history mistress; and when one day she said to me, after a lesson on the retreat from Moscow, "Would you like to come with me to Queen's Hall on Saturday evening? It's a Tchaikovsky night and they're playing the 1812 Overture," it was more a night out with Miss Bawden than the appeal of a symphony concert (of which I knew nothing) that made me say eagerly, "Oh, yes please."

I was quite excited by the sound picture the overture painted for me, but not as moved as I had expected to be, and a little

disappointed. When she said, "I'm afraid you won't care very much for this symphony—it's difficult to understand," how wrong she was! It was the *Pathétique*. Certainly my lack of understanding was complete. But after the exciting and triumphant march music followed by the terrible despair of the finale, I was unable to speak. Miss Bawden looked at me curiously. She was not sure about me. Perhaps she was disappointed at my apparent lack of response. But she was a conscientious teacher, with a deep sense of responsibility towards her pupils. She had to persevere with my training in musical appreciation, so after a week or two she suggested something simpler—a Saturday afternoon organ recital at St Margaret's, Westminster. It was not that I enjoyed organ music more than symphony concerts—the love of classical music born that first night at Queen's Hall has been an abiding interest in my life and I spend far more money than I can afford on records to this day. No, it was something quite other, and part of my secret life.

Stewart Headlam had given me two small books, *The Socialist Church* and *The Meaning of the Mass*. I read and re-read them. That the life of the spirit was not to be regulated by isolated and fallible texts; that the great sacraments and the beauty of ritual could bring great, deep happiness was a revelation. What my grandfather believed in the inmost recesses of his heart, I cannot pretend to know, but of one thing I am certain, he would never have countenanced my attendance regularly at St. Margaret's on Sunday mornings. Perhaps coming events do cast their shadows before them. In my wildest dreams, I never imagined I would one day sit on the Parliamentary Church Council of that lovely church.

But I hated to have a secret from him, especially as secrecy was easy, for by now ill-health kept him to the house and often to his bed, with my grandmother in constant attendance. I have such loving memories of him in those days. In spite of his dislike of the theatre, he was a great student of Shakespeare, and every night before going to sleep he would read one chapter of the Bible and one scene from a favourite play. I can see him now, propped up on a pillow, wearing a tasselled night-cap and a striped night-shirt. His long beard flowed over the patchwork quilt, and in the flickering gaslight the quilt glowed like a field of flowers. He was Abram, Isaac, Jacob and all the patriarchs rolled into one for me. The herbs for his asthma were

on the table by his side and on the bed his Bible and Shakespeare open at the chosen places. I would sit on the end of the bed whilst he read to me. He had a fine sonorous voice and the great speeches rolled off his tongue, making me wish he hadn't hated the theatre, but had been an actor instead of a timber-merchant and a Methodist.

The time came when his sight grew dim and I had to read to him. Sometimes I could even amuse him by subtly introducing into my reading—from *The Tempest*, for example—a description of the great spectacle provided by Tree's production at His Majesty's, and of his comic impersonation of Caliban.

His attacks of asthma grew worse and very frightening, weakening his heart. In great distress I saw the straw laid along the road outside our house. Then one night he slipped quietly away, a beatific smile on his face. I wondered what he saw and what he had discovered at the end of his road.

His death changed all my expectations. At last the uncles had married. Only grandmamma, Emma and I were left in the big house. Hillside was much too large for our depleted family. My grandmother had a small property in Hampshire and with the money my grandfather left, after the sons had had their share, our solicitor advised her to buy an annuity. I had a small bequest which would pay my college fees, but my grandmother had made up her mind. Nothing would induce her to allow me to live alone in London, neither was she prepared to stay there herself. This obduracy was something new, but looking back I can see now that the apparent change in her personality had begun long before my grandfather's death. In some way it was connected with David's death. If she had asserted herself more; insisted that David was her own son, instead of being just an ineffectual shadow of her husband, David might have confided his unhappiness to her; she might even have put down her foot and insisted on his release from the army. But this is pure surmise and I could be wrong.

Whichever way it was, I now saw that behind her sweetness was a core of strength—even obstinacy—which was working against what at the time seemed to be my best interests, and what David would surely have approved for me. Living alone in London, taking my degree and a professional course, was out. Mormons and white slave traffickers haunted her mind. Backed up by Emma, she was deaf to argument.

I consulted Mr Headlam. He took a very objective view of the situation. "Four years," he said, "is a long time. Your grandmother is not a young woman; it might be better if you were earning your living before her death, for her annuity dies with her. Make an application at once to Homerton College, Cambridge. It's the best of all the Training Colleges, set in a university atmosphere; moreover it's a non-conformist college and since your family are well-known in Methodist circles and your matriculation results are good, you stand an excellent chance of acceptance. Then you can come back to a post in London and take your degree externally while teaching."

So it seemed my future was arranged for me. But nothing turned out in the least like that. I'm glad my grandmother lived on for many years—as for Emma, she remained Emma until the day of her death a few years before grandmamma; always a little more sour and ever more apt at giving me my come-uppance.

III

Cambridge

LOVE AFFAIRS ARE ephemeral things. They come and go, without leaving a scar, even a memory—except in the case of David, which was something different. But a love affair with a place is for ever; it is love at first sight; it can span half a century, the image growing ever deeper and always more fair than on that first day.

I went up to Cambridge for my entrance examination on a day of early April; it was bitterly cold and I am sure the motto of Homerton at that time must have been 'Plain living and high thinking', for since it was the Easter vacation, the central heating was turned off. Almost as soon as I arrived I had my interview with the Principal in the combination room and all I can remember about her final remark, as I turned to go, was, "You realise that if you are accepted as a student here, you will have to put up your hair." Not a highly intellectual remark from someone I had been regarding with fearsome awe.

After a meagre dinner of macaroni cheese and stewed prunes, I went up to my study bedroom to do a final bit of swotting. I sat in all my outdoor clothes in shivering misery and felt I was going to hate the place. Bed was even worse. One of my grandfather's eccentricities had been that the young should never wear sleeping garments, since it was the only time the skin had the opportunity to breathe—an eccentricity I've stuck to all my life. That night, following my usual practice, I slipped between the sheets. They were an ice bath and I was quickly out again. I tried wearing my vest, my stockings, my bloomers, but unused to such comforts in bed found sleep impossible. Eventually I compromised by sleeping between the blankets and as I drowsed off heard Emma's familiar sniff, "What a disgusting thing to do!"

It was my startled glance out of a staircase window, on my way down to Hall the next morning, that began my love affair

with Cambridge. Anyone who has seen a fen sunrise or sunset can never forget it. Living in London, and knowing nothing of the wide open spaces of East Anglia, I had always thought Turner's vivid landscapes had lived only in his imagination, or must have been an exaggeration. But here was an exaggeration of an exaggeration—the whole sky was on fire—no sky, no blue, no clouds, just a great sweep of crimson, gold and flame, dying away as I stood there spellbound to a faint daffodil yellow.

My horrid night was forgotten. I was certain I would be able to sit at the hard desk in the examination theatre and polish off all my papers with ease and inspiration, always excepting the maths paper. I wasn't far out. On the third morning, I attempted two maths questions then, seeing no reason why I should waste the rest of the morning on something I couldn't possibly do, handed in my paper to the astonished invigilator, and left. I fetched my small over-night case and walked towards the town. I had a street map of Cambridge and when I reached the 'doll's eye cathedral' caught a quaint one-horse tram which took me as far as Petty Cury. Then I walked for hours: along the Backs, where I saw John's Wilderness starred with bright yellow celandine; across Clare Bridge and beside the river where the weeping willows were already in pale leaf; till I came at last to rest in King's Chapel. Awed by its beauty, I knelt and prayed that I might come to this perfect place to live for three years. I did not guess, then, that I would live there for more than half a century; do my best work there and only leave with reluctance when circumstances made it necessary.

I wandered out on to K.P. just aware that I had eaten nothing since breakfast; and ate a light meal at a café; then I caught the one-horse tram back towards the station and home. I waited with impatience for my results, and with still greater impatience for September when I could go into residence.

I had only been in residence a few days, when I received a note on King's College paper signed by Hugh Dalton, of whom I had never heard. It gave his credentials and said that the Rev. Stewart Headlam had asked him to call in the hope that my college authorities would allow him to introduce me to the University Fabian Society. Later, I saw that note from Stewart Headlam. It said I came from a rather stuffy middle-

class family—Methodist and Liberal in politics—but that I had the makings of a good socialist, provided I did not slip back in the atmosphere of a Women's Training College. I was as much annoyed by the criticism of my family as by the suggestion that I needed to be in leading strings. Never one to do things by halves, before leaving Oldfield Road I had joined the Fabian Nursery, the I.L.P. and the Guild of St Matthew.

The morning after I received the note, I was summoned to the combination room. Miss Allen never wasted time or tried to put one at ease. She was a dour Scot whom we epitomised as 'Stern daughter of the voice of God'.

"You know an undergraduate of King's College?" she asked. No girl of eighteen was going to miss the thrilling experience of meeting an unknown young man of unexceptionable background, and the ready lie slipped off my tongue before I had time to think.

"Yes," I said, "he's a friend of my family." Then, trusting to a name which I supposed must be well known to her, added "and of a great friend of mine, the Reverend Stewart Headlam." This seemed to convince her that I was not up to some trick, unbecoming to one of her students.

"Very well," she replied frigidly. "Miss Carter is free on Tuesday afternoon. She will reply to Mr Dalton and ask him to call at three o'clock"—which did not prevent me from sending a note of my own and a few hints. "When you call on Tuesday will you please call me 'Elizabeth'; ask after my grandmamma's health; and say that Mr Headlam sends his kind regards"—instructions which must have made him as apprehensive of making a mistake as I was apprehensive of his making one. But how else could he pose as an old family friend? If he felt any apprehension it must have increased when he saw Miss Carter, our college dragon, and chaperone-in-chief whenever a student had to meet someone of the opposite sex.

My first impression of Hugh Dalton was of a very tall young man, loose-jointed, with cold grey eyes contradicted by a humorous mouth and the loudest voice one could possibly imagine. We sat in a kind of triangle, as far apart as possible, and Hugh spoke to me as if he were addressing a public meeting. But he made the sensible suggestion that since one of our tutors, Miss Bodkin, regularly attended Fabian meetings, perhaps I

might accompany her. The atmosphere was glacial and the interview, for it was nothing more (not even a cup of tea), soon terminated. I was hot with shame and thought of the hospitality to which any visitor would have been entertained by my grandmother.

When Hugh had beaten a tactical retreat, Miss Carter observed with a sniff, reminiscent of Emma, "Your friend has a very loud voice." I wish I had known then the legend which could have given me the chance of a crushing retort, "Yes, Queen Victoria thought the same!"

So began a political friendship, which lasted a life-time. Hugh's last letter to me, almost indecipherable, was written just before he finished his autobiography, *High Tide and After*. He asked if he might include something he had once said about me at a Party Meeting in the House. It had been at a moment when an injudicious remark had sent him crashing from his post as Chancellor of the Exchequer. He took a seat in the Commons next to mine. Perhaps, at that sad hour, he wanted someone near him who had known him much longer than anyone else in Parliament.

How like him, that speech at the Party Meeting. Whatever he felt in his heart, he would allow nothing to destroy his public image of high-spirited exuberance. It was exactly the same when he was told in 1945 that he was not to be Foreign Secretary, but Chancellor of the Exchequer. Although he said publicly that he was not unhappy or disappointed for more than half an hour, and that he swallowed his fate in one gulp, it was far from the truth. He was deeply disappointed, a truth he never tried to hide from me. He had so enjoyed his work at the Foreign Office with Arthur Henderson, and had never dreamed of being offered any other post in the Cabinet than that of Foreign Secretary. In that office he would have been superb: he had deep admiration for the Slav people, and at that critical period in our foreign relationships, that is where we most needed to show our understanding and sympathy.

"Don't you think I could have drunk them all under the table," he once said jokingly to me, when we were discussing the disasters of the cold war. He would have had a sure touch with the Russians and although he was a great economist and in time became fascinated by his job as Chancellor, he never

loved it or gave it the same devotion he would have given to the Foreign Office.

I won't pretend I was a very serious student. I worked hard at the subjects that interested me, especially those that concerned my training as a teacher, and utterly neglected others. This gave me time for the social side of college life which I enjoyed enormously. I was chairman of the debating society and the drama club, and secretary of our branch of the student Christian union. In my first term I formed a small group, which we arrogantly called 'The Socialist League', and rose much in the estimation of the college staff when Stewart Headlam came to address us. I am not sure if it was my socialism or my soul which most interested him, for just before he said good-bye he asked me what steps I had taken to be baptised and confirmed, and which of the tutors he should contact to make the necessary arrangements.

I played hockey and tennis; went swimming and, without permission or chaperonage, enjoyed many pleasant picnics on the river. But much as I loved college life, it was Cambridge which enchanted me: its beauty, its history, its young springing life. Sometimes when I saw men rushing to or from playing-fields, or from rowing on the river, I would have a moment of jealous agony—this should have been for David.

I had much to thank Hugh Dalton for. Without his friendship, I could not have penetrated very far into the life of the University or met some of the men he knew. Certainly I could not have become a member of the University Fabian Society, for in those days there was a great gulf between training colleges and universities. Although the colleges of education are still regarded somewhat as poor relations, the situation has vastly improved from that which existed at the beginning of the century.

The Fabian Society taught me a thing or two—it certainly knocked off some of my spots of innocence. Many things discussed left me a trifle bewildered. I had never heard of homosexuality, but a frank, open debate on the subject which, sixty years ago, followed exactly the same lines as Wolfenden, made me understand suddenly my grandfather's outraged feelings at the sentence on Oscar Wilde. A lecture by a woman speaker on allowances for motherhood ended in a burst of hilarity when the soft spring evening was rent by agonised yowls which floated through

the open window from the Court below. "A poor little she-cat asking for her allowance," suggested the lecturer, with the utmost nonchalance.

The years passed all too quickly. Finals came up and my results were satisfactory. But I was miserable at the thought of leaving Cambridge. I wandered round all my favourite haunts and for the last time had tea at Buol's with a few of my boy friends who were still up. I comforted myself with the idea that, since school holidays were long and London salaries meant affluence, I could still see the celandines in John's Wilderness, and the faintly green willows along the Cam every Easter; punt lazily on the Granta in my summer holidays; feast my eyes on brilliant leaves clinging to old grey walls during my autumn half-term or even spend an occasional week-end for Evensong at King's.

Youthful dreams, but an entire miscalculation.

For I now had a most difficult decision to make. I had an 'A' teaching mark and was on the London 'List of First Appointments', so everyone expected I would teach in London. When I said I had turned down a London offer they thought I was crazy—"and with a friend like Stewart Headlam," they exclaimed.

Well I had been offered a second choice. Miss Allen sent for me when she knew I was on the L.F.A. She was an imperious creature—a sort of 'Mrs-she-who-must-be-obeyed'.

"I want you to take a post in Cambridge," she began.

My heart leapt up. To live in Cambridge. It seemed like an improbable dream come true. My heart sank like a stone. I should be disappointing Stewart Headlam and a host of other friends who were making plans for my return.

"Where did you want me to teach, Miss Allen?" I asked.

She stared out of the window, drumming her fingers on the table. "New Street," she announced abruptly.

I looked at her in amazement. New Street! The practice school regarded with horror by every student, where the children were so poor, so under-nourished, and so apathetic, that it seemed impossible to strike one spark of interest from them.

"Oh no!" I said involuntarily.

She looked at me coldly. "And why not, pray?" she asked. "Do you, a socialist, think yourself too good for those poor children?"

She began drumming on the table again. She knew she had found my Achilles' heel. She looked at me a little more kindly. "Take twenty-four hours to think it over, then come and see me again."

My heart still hankered after the flesh-pots, the incomparably better salary, the theatres and Proms, the approval of my friends; but somewhere, faintly, my conscience whispered, "You say you never do anything by halves. Here's your chance to prove you're a socialist and not only in name."

The next day I went to Miss Allen's study. "I'll go to New Street," I said. It was like her to show no sign of approval. She had directed my attention to my duty and expected me to follow it. She did however vouchsafe a reason, which I should later have regarded as distinctly unprofessional.

"You did your second school practice at New Street," she began, "so you may not be surprised to hear that my governing body is gravely dissatisfied with the school: the Headmaster is weak; the staff untrained and mostly unqualified, and I've promised to find them a student from among those going down this term who is efficient and interested in the under-privileged. If I cannot do that, then we must give up New Street as a practice school."

What a build-up for a girl of twenty, going to her first post. I thought the staff would certainly hate me; that it would be difficult to win the affection of my pupils and that finding a place to live would be almost impossible, since Cambridge landladies preferred to let licensed lodgings to undergraduates, rather than rooms to impoverished women teachers. Still I had made my choice, and I determined to make a good job of it.

I have had a lot of luck in my life, and what at first seemed an insurmountable ladder had a lot of easy steps to begin with. In the first place I found a friend. Interviewed at the same time as myself was a young uncertificated teacher, a pretty blonde, Dora Burman. I took an immediate liking to her and, over a cup of tea at the Dorothy, we discussed our mutual problem. Would it be cheaper if we lived together; how much could we afford to pay and, as she had to go home that night, would she leave it to me to fix up something—a singularly trusting proposition, since our combined income was £117 per annum.

Fortunately I could turn for advice to Mrs Stewart, who lived

in the old Mill House, opposite Coe Fen. (She was mother of Lady Wilson, once Margaret Stewart, industrial correspondent on the late lamented *News Chronicle*.) Coe Fen was a part of the town I loved and I thought it too far out for licensed rooms. Mrs Stewart had the immediate answer. The District Nurse had just retired and wanted to let the top part of her house in Granchester Street to two quiet young ladies. It was a pleasant house, facing university playing fields. We got a flat, consisting of a sitting room, two bedrooms, a bathroom and attendance, for £1 per week. By today's standards it sounds fantastically cheap, but it made a hole in our tiny income.

Our landlady was a spare, energetic little body. She summoned us to her sitting room on the first evening to lay down the ten commandments. "Young ladies," she began, "there are just a few rules if we are to live comfortably together. First no undergraduates to be entertained in your rooms; then if you must smoke"—she looked disapprovingly at Dora's nicotine-stained fingers and with a friendly smile at my lily-white hands—"please open the windows when you do so. I don't want my furniture impregnated with the disgusting smell of tobacco. Then since I understand you've hired a piano"—our one extravagance at five bob a week each—"please on Sundays only hymns and sacred music."

"Now will you kindly look at something I want to show you." Solemnly she opened the top drawer of a polished tallboy. Puzzled, we looked at a snow-white linen night-gown with beautifully goffered frills (which reminded me of the drawers I used to wear as a little girl), a pair of white stockings, a pair of white cotton gloves and a white headband.

I wondered if she might be about to marry to eke out her small pension. Far from it!

"When I am dead," she began. With a look of horror Dora bolted from the room. I stood my ground, consumed with curiosity. "She's young and irresponsible," the old lady began again. "When I'm dead, I want you to give these garments to whoever lays me out and see that they're used, so that I look presentable." Then, taking an envelope from the corner of the drawer, she added, "These are the pennies for my eyes."

I nodded mutely, trembling in every limb; I felt in my bones I would have Judgment Day nightmares again. I fled upstairs

to the flat and found Dora dissolved in hysterical laughter. "The old ghoul," she giggled. "We'll both be married before she's dead," in which forecast Dora proved right. I expect Dora, who soon became prime favourite, got a nice present. All I had was a plain post-card, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers."

I have pleasant memories of the two years I spent with Dora in Granchester Street, our bicycle rides in the softly-rising morning mists, across Coe Fen and down Silver Street, on the way to school; our early morning swims in the Fen Pool, and sometimes on warm summer evenings down to Byron's Pool; cold winter Saturday afternoons, with a blazing fire and open windows, while we watched the men playing hockey in the field opposite; an autumn walk to King's for Evensong. Our pleasures were simple for we had no money to indulge in any kind of entertainment that had to be paid for. We read a lot of books from the public library, played our hired piano and argued incessantly about politics.

When Dora married and went back to her home in King's Lynn, I moved nearer to town. The play-centre, which I had started at New Street, meant a trying ride home on winter evenings, and my political work was using up more and more of my time.

It wasn't possible before 1918 to be an individual member of the Labour Party. The only way into a Trades and Labour Council was through the Fabian Society, the I.L.P. or an affiliated trades union. Soon after leaving college, I became secretary of the Cambridge Branch of the I.L.P., a delegate to the Trades Council and eventually, while still in my early twenties, its chairman. What a grand crowd we were: I have been closely associated with many constituency parties, but never one so free from malice, jealousy and petty backbiting.

I must quote from one of Hugh's letters :

Looking back to Cambridge, where you and I worked together for so long, what a lovely party it was; what a wealth and variety of local personalities—you and I, Jim and Alice Overton, Albert Stubbs, Billy Briggs, Bill Few and little Rous of the N.U.R. Then the women like Agnes Ramsey and Clara Rackham. Never have I known such a Party, and I've known

a good many, where there was so much talent and such good comradeship.

The date of that letter is August 24 1949, years after he fought his first election in the Borough as it then was. Neither of us ever forgot those exhilarating days or the friends we had then. Most of our members were delegates from their trades unions, but some came in through other doors. Mr and Mrs Cawston, a charming, elderly couple, who felt the need of a little culture in the Party, invited us all to meet in their drawing room every Thursday evening, to read plays—Shaw, Ibsen, Wilde—to discuss new books as they were published and new ideas as they became current. I suspect we were a very unsophisticated crowd, but we possessed something I do not find in constituency parties today, a deep, unquestioning comradeship. We were all pacifists, and it is difficult to believe, after our experience before the Second World War, that we had the faintest idea of the tragedy towards which we were drifting.

I sometimes think those were the happiest days of my life. Although I was immersed in political activities I seemed to have plenty of time for enjoyment. I played tennis and went swimming all the year round, and after a quite stiff audition was admitted to membership of the University Musical Society. For years, under Alan Gray and then Cyril Rootham, I enjoyed the pleasures of choral singing in John's College Chapel, in Ely Cathedral and, most memorable of all, *The Magic Flute* at the old Cambridge Theatre. I was a member of the A.D.C. and played lead in many shows at the charming little theatre in Green Street. I kept up a lively correspondence with Hugh Dalton, for even at that time he had Cambridge in mind as a possible constituency and myself as the genie with the lamp, who could secure it for him.

My energy must have been inexhaustible for I found New Street a hard chore. I always had between seventy and eighty children in my class and I taught in a kind of annexe to the main building, a huge room used on Sundays as The Ragged School Mission. It was terribly cold in winter, the only source of heat coming from a great, black, ugly coke stove stuck in the middle of the room and called a 'tortoise'. But the feature which really terrified me was a long window, giving on to the street and at street level. This became a kind of peep-show, a

never-ending source of entertainment for the ladies of the neighbourhood, who gathered round, mimicking my accent, shouting admonitions to their offspring 'to be'ave', but more often bawling threats to me about what would 'appen to me if I laid an 'and on Liz or Joe or Bill: something I would never have wished, let alone dared to have done. Yet caning was certainly the order of the day at New Street. The Head had a disconcerting way of bursting into the room, stick in hand, and what he euphemistically called 'dusting the jackets of the little perishers'—always the most inoffensive among them. No class ever less deserved punishment.

Poor, poor mites! Under-fed, over-worked, lacking sleep, I often wished for a bit of real naughtiness; but they didn't have enough spirit. When I look at the splendid, robust youngsters of today, with children's allowances, school milk and school meals, and the whole paraphernalia of the Welfare State protecting them, it seems incredible that little more than half a century ago, girls and boys should have been so destitute as those I taught in my first school—and in a university town. Colleagues in some parts of the country had to fight against the half-time system. I often thought we had the harder task, for our children were out on the streets late at night selling and delivering papers, up early in the morning on a milk, paper or baker's round, and at school all day. In the winter, blue, chilblained fingers, running noses, and toes sticking out of ruined shoes were the hall-mark of their poverty.

In those days, school feeding was permissive, at the whim of the Local Education Authority. I tried to get the School Medical Officer to order milk for the most needy, but there was a regulation. Before milk could be advised, he must certify that the child was suffering from malnutrition: 'already suffering from malnutrition'—could anything have been more monstrous! I was roused to fury by the death of a small girl in my class. I had been to see her in the tiny attic bedroom she shared with her three brothers. Her mother, a widow, was out at work—no widow's allowances in those days—poor-law relief if you were humble enough to ask for it. The wizened little face and terrible laboured breathing, the brave effort to give me a smile of recognition, tore at my heart. I threw the oranges I had brought on to the bed and rushed from the room to find a doctor.

On the stairs, blinded by tears, I banged into someone coming up. It was her doctor.

"Hey, steady on," he said, "I'm only a little chap and you're a big girl." He looked at my streaming eyes.

"What's up?" he asked.

"The little girl, Mary, you won't let her die," I gulped.

"If that little girl were as strong as you, she might have a chance—but she's undernourished, she has no strength to fight," he said sadly.

"Then you put the truth on her death certificate," I shouted, glaring at him. "Died from starvation." And pushing past him I rushed out into the mean street.

But I heard him shouting after me, "If you're her teacher, why don't YOU do something about it?"

During the following week, the monthly meeting of the Trades and Labour Council was due to meet. For some time I'd been agitating for the right of the Press to attend our meetings. This was the first occasion at which they would be present—a heaven-sent opportunity. After the formal business there was always a place on the agenda for the chairman's report. I launched into a fierce denunciation of permissive legislation in general, then, telling the story of Mary's death, said the most wounding thing that came into my mind—"So because of permissive legislation your education committee must wait until a child is in its coffin, dead from malnutrition, before the medical officer can certify that it is in need of milk."

It was a bombshell which the Press fully exploited. I was immediately summoned to appear before the education committee, either to withdraw my outrageous remarks and apologise for them, or to take a month's notice to terminate my engagement.

Now I did not want to leave New Street, where I had started many innovations and was winning the trust of both children and parents; I did not want to leave Cambridge, where I was building a place for myself in the community. But I certainly did not intend to apologise or retract my accusation. So I sent a formal request to my Union to come and protect my interests. If there was any apologising to do they could do it for me. One or two speeches at our annual conference had made the N.U.T. officials a little wary of me, so the official who came from

the Law Department begged me to leave it all in his hands. "I'll do the talking and don't you interrupt," he said firmly.

How well I guessed the kind of speech he would make—"young and enthusiastic; devoted to her work and her children; already well-remarked upon by H.M.I. in a recent report; sure the committee does not want to deprive itself of the services of such a promising young teacher; carried away by a child's death, spoke without thinking. The Union realises the committee does what it can within the limits of legislation and it is the earnest desire of the Union to broaden legislation on behalf of our children", and so on and so on—most effective. I've made the same kind of speech myself hundreds of times, as an official of the Union, on behalf of erring teachers.

I sat as ordered, meekly by his side and did not utter one word of protest, since no apology was tendered on my behalf. I wasn't sure the committee would be satisfied. But I had many powerful friends, notably Dr John Dalton, Chairman of the Health Committee, Mrs Alan Gray, Mrs Rootham, Mrs Keynes, Mrs C. D. Rackham, all of whom I had met on the Cambridge Branch of The National Council of Women, and all of whom were in general agreement with what I had said although not very approving of my wildly dramatic way of expressing myself.

One of the reasons I had aroused interest among the women members of the committee was an experiment I had started at New Street: an evening play centre, the first in this country. I had copied it from something I had seen in the States, at Jane Adams' Settlement, when on a visit to my parents. I had obtained permission from my managers to use two rooms in the school from five o'clock to seven o'clock every evening, so that children might come in off the streets and enjoy themselves with quiet games, reading, handicrafts, drama, etc. It had proved a great success—too great in fact. On that first evening, over one hundred children turned up. Only two members of the staff had volunteered to help; so that first night I had to explain that it was registration night; we would take the names of those who really wanted to join and next week we would have games, puzzles, story-books, for those who wanted to read quietly, and a mug of cocoa for everyone before they went home. I felt a frightful cheat and worried terribly in case I might not be able to carry out my promise.

The next day I went to see Mrs Keynes to ask her help and

advice. "You never do anything by halves, do you," she said rather reprovingly. But she went immediately to work, found students from Newnham and Girton to help, collected money, books, material and toys, so that the next week we were able to divide the children into small groups of ten or a dozen, each with a leader. During the summer, undergraduates came to give the boys a bit of cricket on Coldham Common. There was never any trouble beyond some hilarity at the Christmas parties, which was only natural for the children had never seen such largesse as their 'college ladies and gents' provided for them. I think it did those young people as much good as it did the children. Without that experience, they never would have guessed that their proud and beautiful university town had this hidden backwater of poverty, or that the respectable women in capes and bonnets who ministered to their comfort on a disgraceful, sweated pittance, were the mothers of these children. In due course this was something I was able to rectify.

We kept the play-centre running, with ever-increasing popularity, until the outbreak of war in 1914, when the problem of black-out proved impossible of solution and everyone was too busily engaged in other activities. After the war it was revived and a summer play school, under good supervision, was provided during the long summer holidays, under the direct auspices of the local authority.

IV

1914-18

AT THE BEGINNING of 1914 I became engaged to Will Manning, a young assistant at the University Observatory. Except for my engagement it seemed a year like any other. Under Will's influence, I became a sailing enthusiast. We bought a sprightly little dinghy, the *Hawk*; to be followed by a cabin cruiser, the *Thrush*, and finally a carvel-built half-rater, the *Swallow*. Fortunately sailing was not the expensive hobby it has become today: during that summer we spent every week-end and many long evenings on the river.

I was dimly aware of tensions in Europe and of the hostile feelings aroused by the growing strength of the German navy; but I had no apprehensions. I loved the German people. During several previous summers, I had spent my holidays wandering in the Black Forest with young socialists and *wandervogel* groups, complete with rucksacks and sleeping bags, and strumming our guitars and ukeleles. We had even planned to spend our honeymoon on one of the Baltic Islands. At that time, no one thought of the German people in the same terms as we came to think of them in the menacing years before the end of the thirties.

On the last day of June, I handed in my resignation to the Education Secretary: our marriage was planned for the end of July. I was surprised and not a little disappointed when, towards the middle of July, Will announced, "We can't go away, certainly not to Germany. We'd better settle for the Denver Regatta. We'll take the *Thrush* and the *Hawk* and spend a bit of time sailing the little waterways before we head for Denver."

I was still more astonished when I received a note from Mr Jenkins, our Education Secretary, asking me to call in at the office as soon as possible. "Can you leave me an address where I can get in touch with you?" he asked. "And if the necessity arises would you be willing to come back to teaching, at least for a time?" A married woman teacher! Such a phenomenon

was unheard of in 1914. But I was as pleased as surprised. I had hated the idea of giving up my work. I gave him the Denver address and added that although I should be delighted to get back into the classroom, I hoped to God the necessity he had in mind would not arise.

The clouds were rolling up; still the idea of war in Europe seemed incredible. What had happened in Serbia, the conflict of an unimportant little Balkan State with Austria, seemed to my pacifist-centred mind of no possible consequence to us—there was always trouble in the Balkans. And anyway, what about the International: the workers of the world would unite to prevent such a catastrophe as war. What misplaced faith! I went on preparing for my wedding on July 24, more anxious about the growing turmoil in Ireland than about anything that might happen in Europe. What did I know about secret diplomacy, or the devious commitments of Sir Edward Grey to France?

So we sailed up the tiny creeks, The Lark, The Wissey and Burwell Lode, stopping for dinner at little country pubs; buying enormous mushrooms to take back for breakfast; we were away from it all. We reached Denver on July 31. The *Sluice* was gay with bunting and assembled craft. Amid much friendly banter we went aboard the Commodore's boat for a drink. He had a newspaper open on the transom.

"Serious news," he said.

"What new?" I asked, mildly surprised.

"Russia has mobilised and Jaurès has been assassinated," he answered grimly.

Like lightning, my mind jumped to a horrifying possibility. Could the Government drag us into war to support Russia? and who were we going to fight—Germany? My mind whirled round and round, but still couldn't accept such a numbing conclusion.

On Monday morning we read in the papers of the great rally in Trafalgar Square and of the solemn affirmation made by speakers, that we could not contemplate a war to support Russia. I suppose that if members of our sailing club were interested in politics at all, 70 per cent were Tories and 10 per cent Liberals. Certainly there wasn't a Socialist among them except myself, whom they regarded with tolerant amusement. Yet they all agreed with what the Socialists had said at the Trafalgar Square rally. War was unthinkable. In the evening the men went

into King's Lynn to see if there were any papers, or to glean what news they could from The Ferry Steps. The girls stayed in the boats to cook the evening meal. Long before it was ready, the men were back with papers which carried Gray's speech.

Sadly we took down the bunting: the regatta was over. The next morning the little flotilla set out for our club grounds at Waterbeach, moored the boats and picked up bicycles for the return to Cambridge.

Our engagement had been a very short one for those days. When the Solar Physics Observatory had moved from London to Cambridge, new buildings had been put up, including a charming small house which was offered to us if we could marry in the summer of 1914. So when we set out from Waterbeach, it was to the Observatory we made our way, to a house which was not ready for us, where one weary, dispirited young woman was to begin a new life under the worst possible auspices.

I had married into a family as unlike my own as it was possible to imagine. My father-in-law was a fen farmer. The Fens! How few people seemed to appreciate them at that time. Such lovely, rich, black soil I had never seen before; nor had I imagined the revelations of a walk on Wicken Fen. There one might find the dainty rare *orchis incarnata*; watch the embroidered flight of heron across a cloudless sky; then wait to see the colours change and melt and change again, until the wide horizon was filled with flames of orange, crimson and gold. I became a fen addict. All that spring and early summer, we would sail up Burwell Lode, coming back laden with largesse from the farm—great brown eggs from the free-ranging hens, plump chickens and thick white stems of asparagus. But Mr Manning senior, although a shrewd and successful farmer, was a throw-back to the ancient fen men of history: short, dark and thick-set, obdurate as his ancestors who had defied first the Norman conquerors then Vermuyden and his 'under-takers'; who called on Father Flood to come and drown'em and sang with vigour such riotous and blasphemous songs as 'Powtes Complaint', of which some more respectable verses went like this:

Come brethren of the water and let us all assemble
To treat upon the matter that make us quake and tremble,
For we shall rue it if't be true, that fens be undertaken

And where we feed in reed and fen, they'll feed both beef
and bacon.

Away with boats and rudders, farewell both boots and skatches
No need of one nor t'other, men now make better matches
Stilt-makers all and tanners shall complain of this disaster
For they will make each muddy lake, for Essex calves a pasture.

Wherefore let us now entreat our antient water nurses
To show their power so great, as to help to drain their purses
And send us good old Captain Flood to lead us out to battle
The twopenny Jack, with skates on's back, will drive out all
the cattle.

One art which my father-in-law and my husband never gave up was that of the 'Two-penny Jack'. When the weather was right and the fens a glittering roadway of ice, they could skate from Burwell to Upware 'five miles from anywhere', with no trouble at all.

Although always polite and courteous to me, it didn't take me long to detect a sense of strain between Mr Manning senior and Caroline, as I always called my mother-in-law. She was a very beautiful woman, tall, graceful and faultlessly made up—which amused me, since I had never (indeed never have) sported so much as a dab of powder on my nose. They were as ill-matched in temperament as in looks. That was how it came about that, when we reached the end of our miserable journey on August 4 1914, we found lights burning in our windows, cheerful fires and a meal on the way.

An explosive situation had been reached on the Burwell farm. Caroline had returned from a shopping day in Cambridge to find that the old man had cut down the legs of some Hepplewhite chairs and put them in the dairy. Bit by bit he had, over the years, destroyed all the beautiful things he had inherited: they were his, he could do what he liked with them. Caroline had packed her bags and had come straight to the Observatory. Except for some part of the war, when she became Matron of a Church Home, in Woolwich, for keeping stray girls away from the Arsenal, she never left us until she died some fourteen years later.

The next morning, Will went across to see Professor Newall,

to find out what were his immediate plans. My husband was no pacifist and expected to join up. He was back in under ten minutes.

"Can't get anything out of the Prof," he said. "He's incoherent with rage, they've commandeered his horses."

I burst into tears. Nothing could have brought home to me more clearly the tragedy of war. Of course I had got it all wrong, those were graceful carriage horses and spirited hunters. But all I could see at that moment was the bloody picture of a battlefield which had hung on some remote classroom wall, of horses shot through the belly, bowels gushing out; and our Prof's horses plunging and rearing behind gun carriages on a field of carnage. How vivid are the impressions which can be conjured up from the recesses of the mind in moments of stress and how important that we should fill the minds of our children with beautiful images. They learn the harsh realities of life all too soon.

"Anyhow," Will continued, affecting not to notice my distress, "work will stop here for the time being. In the meantime, I'm to go to the Cavendish—then who knows?"

It's easy enough to be a pacifist when the idea of war is unbelievable; that the powerful engines of propaganda could, overnight, turn a peace-loving people into a nation glorying in war, and finding a patriotic fervour which exalted them, was a phenomenon undreamed of in my philosophy. 'Poor little Belgium, the cockpit of Europe': that phrase, repeated over and over again, produced a delirium of anxiety to be up and 'doing one's bit'.

But I could not change. I did not believe that war was either just or inevitable, and throughout those ghastly years I stood firmly with my friends of the I.L.P., sustained by the conviction that this was an unnecessary war—a view now held by every intelligent person. Now! but only after we had sacrificed a whole generation; the flower of every nation in Europe; had sown the seeds of a further Armageddon and ruined the economy of the Western world for half a century. At that moment in time, pacifism was not an easy stand to take.

One of the most popular activities in my play-centre had been 'hospital night'. The kids loved dressing up as doctors and nurses, learning to bandage, and what to do in case of accidents. So that I shouldn't make any mistakes, I had joined the Red Cross and taken all three certificates. I never thought

that what had been fun and games could now be put to a very different purpose. I offered my services to The First Eastern Hospital as a V.A.D. If I couldn't stop men from being torn to pieces, perhaps I could do something to comfort and assuage. The first work I was given was to meet the trains of wounded coming straight from the battlefields. The men arrived lousy, their uniforms matted with mud, blood and pus, which the trained nurses had to cut free before wounds could be cleaned up and dressed; and later in the year, with toes and fingers dropping off from frost-bite. If anything could have added to the macabre scene, it was that long, dark, sinister station. Some men were too tired or too weak to raise to their lips the mugs of tea we brought them; others drained off their drink without stopping to swallow.

'Over by Christmas; over by Christmas', they kept chanting. But it seemed as if it would never be over. The battles became bloodier, the blunders more egregious, munitions shorter. Trench warfare, gas warfare; men coming off the trains coughing up their hearts—and those terrifying lists of names. One tried not to read them, but they had a compulsive, dreadful fascination, which one read with a beating heart, frightened that some well-loved name would leap out in stark, black letters. Both my brothers were with the Canadians; my nephew, a mere boy, was killed in the first few weeks and an uncle, much too old to serve, died of pneumonia during the first winter—one of the 'old contemptibles' of the B.E.F.

Friends from carefree college days went one by one—most deeply-mourned of all was Rupert Brooke, his bright young life extinguished, not in battle, but in a hospital ship off Skyros. What a bitter blow for Hugh! They were a real David and Jonathan. In later years, when I saw Rupert's portrait on Hugh's desk, the words of a great lament always came into my mind:

Very pleasant hast thou been unto me.

Thy love to me was wonderful; passing the love of women.

I was nearly always alone in the house at the Observatory. Will was off on some high security job to do with submarines; he was away in the North of England for weeks together, and Caroline was chasing her naughty girls in Woolwich. For five years, I went every day to school, then straight on duty at the

hospital. One week-end in four, I tried to keep the Party together; and met a group of pacifists who were working in the villages around Cambridge. Then, somehow or other, I got pushed into the job of secretary to the Borough Food Control Committee.

What trivial things can disappoint one at such times. My eldest brother, who had been fighting on the Somme, and had survived the retreat from Mons, had a short leave. Rationing was very tight, but somehow I had contrived to save a tin of corned beef. This I proudly set out for his first lunch. He took one disgusted look at it, then exploded, "Christ! Bully!" I was inexplicably wounded as I put away the despised delicacy and brought out an egg.

I had one small source of supply, which, strictly speaking, was, I suppose, illegal. I had always felt obscurely sorry for my father-in-law. I thought the old man must feel lonely away on the fen, so whenever I could spare one of the precious Thursday half-holidays (which Cambridge schools enjoyed throughout the summer months), I cycled over to Burwell—and I never came back empty-handed. There were no luxuries like chickens and asparagus these days but, what I needed far more, eggs and potatoes and, in the autumn, fruit from the orchard. How popular I was with my colleagues: one big potato and one egg for each of them was undreamed-of largesse.

In 1917 the Russian Revolution filled every one of us with hope. Russian soldiers, half-clad, starving and without ammunition had turned their backs on the struggle and made for home. The stories that reached us were chaotic, but my instinct told me that Russia was taking the right road. I had never forgotten a picture I had seen as a sixth-former, of students, who had gone in good faith to plead with the Little Father, being shot down in droves, their bodies lying stark in the Red Square. I now heard with growing excitement of the Workers' and Soldiers' Conventions, which were being planned in many Russian cities, and I sent my subscription to the 1917 Club, although it was a very long time before I could take advantage of my membership.

I took no part in the 'Peace by Negotiation' movement, although when the second or Bolshevik revolution broke out, I still thought Russia was right. I was too weary, feeling too unwell, to make any kind of effort, except to keep on with the routine of my work—school, hospital; school, hospital. In March 1918,

with the break-through of the German Army and the defeat of our Fifth Army, I began to be frightened: something I had never been since I was a child.

"You know what this means," my patients would say. "If the Bosche breaks through to the Channel Ports, we've had it Sister." The men always called us V.A.D.s 'Sister', much to the annoyance of the trained nurses who looked on us with contempt, in spite of the drudgery from which we relieved them.

I was pregnant and I suppose I had a *crise de nerfs*. Cycling home along the dark and deserted Madingley Road at midnight, I was suddenly convinced I saw a company of steel-helmeted Uhlans bearing down on me. I thought the threatened invasion had taken place. But I was wound up. I couldn't stop. In the summer my baby daughter was born. She only survived three weeks. I couldn't grieve. All my tears were shed. Lloyd George brought us some cheer, but what we needed was a morale booster—a Churchill.

Then suddenly it was all over. When I was in Berlin later I came to believe implicitly that letters from their homes to German soldiers in the trenches, telling of the starvation of their children, had broken their resistance. Our blockade, carried on to our lasting shame, long after the Armistice was signed, was a monstrous crime against German children.

I was in London for the Labour Party Conference on November 11. It was a strange affair, to decide whether we should stay in the Coalition after the war or come out and fight on our own, which, of course, we decided to do. The most important decision taken at the Conference was to allow individual membership of the Party. This meant an increase to our funds and made it possible to put up many more candidates than in the past.

The crowds in Trafalgar Square that night were delirious. Not so many months ago, defeat had stared us in the face. Now we were victorious: we had won through. To many of us all that mattered was that we were at peace. What were we to make of such a peace? The future of the world hung on that question.

Of most immediate interest to me, was that we should find a Labour candidate and fight our first Parliamentary election in Cambridge. All my war weariness had left me. I entered with zest into preparations for the fight, but with a total lack

of experience I had no idea of what lay before us. I remember so well propping up my bicycle by the kerb, at the foot of Castle Hill—a lunch-time rendezvous with Jim Overton, Secretary of the Party, whenever there was important Party business afoot.

“What about it?” I asked, on this occasion.

“We’ve got to do it,” he replied sombrely. “This election will settle the fate of Europe for the next fifty years, but I don’t know where the money’s coming from.”

More irresponsible than my Secretary, I exclaimed that we would fight the election first and find the money after.

“Never heard of a Returning Officer’s deposit, I suppose?” asked Jim sarcastically. Frankly I hadn’t, but even the thought of a deposit couldn’t damp my enthusiasm for running two candidates, one in the Borough and one in the County. Before we parted we had made arrangements for calling an immediate meeting of the Central Executive Committee, and had decided to back up one another in our decision to run two candidates, and to resolve the C.E.C. into a Ways and Means Committee for raising the deposit.

I have a very distinct memory of that first vital meeting. Crouching over a miserable fire in the upper chamber of the Kingston Café at the foot of Mill Hill Bridge we began exploring our possibilities for raising money. Three or four of us offered £5 each, which we thought very generous until we were startled by Overton saying he would guarantee the whole of the deposit for the Borough—a pretty risky business in a khaki election, when national sentiment was ablaze with hatred and prejudice. He told the County representatives to go back to the agricultural workers and collect two shillings a head to cover their deposit. A week later they came back with £120.

The Tory candidate, Eric Geddes, large, aggressive and bull-necked, soon became a familiar sight in the main streets of the Borough. He was perpetually on parade, his rough Inverness overcoat flapping dismally round his ankles, his hands thrust deep in his pockets, while he ruminated how best ‘to make the Germans pay’, and the finest spot to ‘hang the Kaiser’. The contrast between Geddes and our own candidate, The Rev. Rhondda Williams, was fantastic. Williams, a typical Nonconformist minister with all the passionate sincerity of a Welsh revivalist, could never bring himself to stoop to the dirt of the

1918 election. Yet persuasion, argument, ordinary common-sense were of no avail in those heart-breaking days. As I threaded my way through a crowded meeting in the Romsey Town ward, a man in the audience shouted, "Give us some bloody politics gal". And what he meant by bloody politics was the kind of pernicious stuff Geddes knew so well how to grind out. "Squeeze Germany 'till the pips squeak," he roared truculently. His slogan rang out from Cambridge and reverberated round the world—it made our cheeks burn with shame, so despicably un-English was its sentiment towards a defeated foe. But it was the policy which prevailed, a policy which was to ruin Europe for generations. Where generosity—indeed less than generosity, ordinary economic common-sense—might have stabilised Central Europe, we were left with an embittered, sullen enemy, ruthlessly re-arming as soon as the opportunity came: an enemy in whom all individual liberty was subjugated to a single obsession, the wiping out of the shameful indignity to which the German nation had been subjected by the Treaty of Versailles. I saw this cancer grow as year after year I visited Berlin from 1919 to 1934, when my visa was withdrawn.

I have taken part in many exciting elections and bye-elections since 1919, yet never quite re-captured the authentic thrill we all experienced when we first ran our Labour candidate in Cambridge, that dyed-in-the-wool Tory Borough. Without exception the Party officials worked eighteen and twenty hours every day. With the candidate, we constituted the entire platform at every meeting, although we found some new and valuable recruits as we went along.

Stubbs, the agricultural workers' candidate in the County, put us in a spot as a party, and me particularly as a person. He complained that he was being left to fight the County single-handed, which was silly tactics anyway, since we hadn't a snowflake-in-hell chance of victory in the Borough, whereas he thought he had a sporting chance in the County. We were most reluctant to spend time away from the Borough, but his complaint was justified, and three of us offered to give him three evenings each, spread over the last ten days, but excluding the eve of the poll. Incredible as it may seem for a man fighting a County constituency, Stubbs, a printer with the *Cambridge Daily News*, didn't lose an hour off work except to take in his nomination papers—he dared not!

What a circus that campaign was. The evenings I went out with him I would cycle to his work-place and wait until he came off his machine at 5.30, when we drank a cup of strong, sweet tea while Stubbs performed a primitive toilet by wiping his hands on a piece of cotton waste. We set out, with me perched on the back of his motor-bike, for the first village. I took the Chair, while Stubbs spoke; then he took the Chair for me; then we pushed off to the next village, and so on, from village to village, as long as there were people waiting to hear us.

It was a difficult personal situation for me. My husband was a staunch Liberal and his friend, The Rt Hon. E. S. Montague, was contesting the Division. In any event, Will would have worked for Montague, a splendid, upright statesman, later to die of a broken heart, killed by the ingratitude of those from whom he had deserved a better fate. But it was difficult and we had to work out a strategy so that we didn't clash in the same village on the same night.

I cannot remember very much about that polling day, except that I was in charge of a dismal committee room in East Road and that I had at my disposal one disreputable, superannuated 'tin Lizzie'. I did a little pulling out myself, but felt so remarkably like Boadicea driving her chariot that I was glad to retire to the relative obscurity of my committee room. There were echoes of a far-off battle: a battle that gave us a Government of hard-faced business men who had done well out of the war; a government that destroyed Europe, for with it, having won the war, we lost the peace.

More Political and Trade Union Activities in Cambridge

ABOUT CHRISTMAS I had a letter from Hugh, saying that Susan Lawrence and her friend Clara Rackham had suggested he should consider Cambridge as a possible constituency. What did I think, because I was the one who would have to pull the strings? Could I get him an invitation to address the local party? This was a bit ingenuous, for we had discussed such a possibility many times before. However I called an immediate meeting of the Executive Committee, who were delighted to have anyone so robust to tackle Eric Geddes. Many of our people remembered him as an undergraduate, for he was a member of the I.L.P. and often came to Trades Council meetings.

"Let's get him here at once; call it the Selection Conference; we don't want to bother about short lists and all that paraphernalia," I suggested. "The thing is to get him before the electorate as soon as possible." Transport House would drop dead at such irregular proceedings today. We weren't so particular then.

He came early in the New Year and gave a fabulous description of the 'hard-faced business men who had done well out of the war and of whom your member is one'. He was adopted unanimously and with enthusiasm as our Prospective Parliamentary Candidate, and Jim Overton was instructed to tell Headquarters what we had done.

The Daltons came to live, with their little daughter, Helen, in Panton Street. It took Will and me some time to get on terms with Ruth, for she had her own friends in the University, but later we became good friends and she helped me to run the first Family Planning Clinic in Cambridge—at that time thought to be not very respectable. She was awfully good for Hugh. She

had a hard, resolute streak in her make-up whilst Hugh, in spite of his bonhomie and loud voice, really had a soft centre which people didn't suspect unless they knew him well.

A lover of beauty, in poetry and in nature, this was the only side of him I had known in our early friendship. The war had hardened him, yet I can remember two occasions during the 1945 Parliament when he astonished the House by this more endearing side of his character.

In his second budget, he introduced his National Land Fund. His peroration was magnificent. He said :

Yet there is still a wonderful, incomparable beauty in Britain, in the sunshine on the hills, the mists adrift across the moors, the wind on the downs, the wash of the waves against the white unconquerable cliffs, Hitler never scaled. It is surely fitting, in this proud moment in our history, that we should make, through this fund, a thank-offering for victory, a war memorial finer than any work of art in bronze or stone.

The second great occasion, when he introduced the Bill to end the perpetual pension paid to holders of the title of Lord Nelson, showed him as the sentimental, the romantic—not the public image he delighted to cultivate. But it was only now and again that the mask slipped.

Two years after Hugh's adoption, Geddes resigned and we were soon in the thick of an exciting bye-election. Douglas Newton, a well-known local land-owner and a good friend of mine, was the Tory candidate; Cope Morgan, with whom I did not get on, was the Liberal opponent. And Will, ardent Liberal as he was, after a little persuasion, cast his vote for Hugh.

For three weeks we scarcely stopped to breathe. All the party leaders came down to speak for us and a host of undergraduates helped our members to make a thorough canvass. We had hosts of cars lent by senior members of the University. Our out-door meetings were exciting, but sometimes a little rough. I remember an occasion when Maurice Dobb ('band-box Bertie') and I were addressing a huge crowd, from a cart on Market Square. A score of undergraduates got between the shafts and ran us round and round the Square. I couldn't keep my balance, and since I soon began, indelicately, to show my underwear, Maurice pushed

me down on to a chair and clung desperately to it himself, while the men continued their frolic with cries of 'good old Ginger' and 'good old Bertie'.

Another time we had a mid-day meeting at the corner of Milton Road, opposite a pub. A man came lurching out holding a pint mug of beer. Putting it to his lips, he drank it down in one swallow. "Bet that's something you can't do old cock," he challenged. "Leah, go and get me a pint," Hugh ordered. Back again in a few minutes, Hugh took the tankard from me and amid cheers from the crowd, which had gathered to see the fun, downed it froth and all in one breath.

He made a good fight of it, but after his defeat we did not feel we could ask him to stand again at the General Election. Cambridge, at that time, was not a winnable proposition and we all felt that, with his specialised knowledge, he was needed in the House. But in finding a seat, he had the worst possible luck. He tried Maidstone, Cardiff East, Boston-with-Holland, and finally landed up with a modest majority in Peckham. I helped him and Ruth in all three campaigns, indeed in many others for the Party. We were complementary as a team, Hugh full of facts and figures and theories, especially on the Capital Levy, my own efforts more fervent and emotional.

I remained close friends with them for years, often staying with them in their flat near Battersea Park. In all that time I can only remember one disagreement with Hugh, but that was pretty profound. How a man as intelligent and perceptive could have felt an indiscriminating admiration for Mussolini passed my judgment. Yet he had a pathological hatred of the Germans, which he displayed long before the rise to power of Hitler. Whenever I returned from Germany he seemed to take it as a personal affront and would ask sneeringly, "And how did you find your blond German he-man?" Nor could I ever arouse him to any degree of indignation about Spain. He thought my book *What I Saw in Spain* gross exaggeration, well-documented though it was. I used to chaff him about my German boy friends and say it was only male jealousy, yet I felt that somewhere there was a curious lack of reason in his mind about fascism. But no one was so quick to see the danger in Germany when it arose. Was it the pretensions of Hitler he hated, rather than his fascism? This has always remained an unresolved problem in

my mind—not the only one Hugh Dalton, close friend as he was, posed for me during the time ahead.

For the next few years, I was almost wholly taken up with trade union activities. The economic crisis, which was the immediate result of Churchill's premature return to the gold standard, came to a head with the coal-owners' attack on the miners. 'Reduction in wages and lengthening of hours,' said the owners; 'Not a penny off the pay, not a minute on the day,' said Arthur Cook, the miners' leader. So the owners locked out the men. When the Government refused to intervene, the miners accepted a reduction in pay. A special conference of Trade Union Executives was called. They responded magnificently, deciding to bring out all their members in support of the locked-out miners. All forms of transport, iron and steel and allied industries, gas and electricity, all printing, including newspapers, all building, other than housing and hospital work were to stop.

Ernie Bevin declared :

Even if every penny goes, and every asset is swallowed up, history will write that it was a magnificent generation, that was prepared to do this, rather than see the miners driven down like slaves. I rely in the name of the General Council on every man and woman to fight for the soul of labour and the salvation of the miners.

The General Strike lasted from May 3 to May 12, 1926. Just eight days!

In Cambridge we set up a General Strike Committee : it met in Clara Rackham's basement kitchen. It was full of lively, exhilarating talk and the delicious smell of hot coffee and frying sausages. Undergraduates worked with us all the evening, rolling and preparing for delivery the Strike Bulletin, then sprinting off across Parker's Piece in all directions to avoid being 'gated'. Every night I would ride to London on the back of Stubbs's motor-bike to pick up the bulletin. What a fantastic time!

I had been made a Justice of the Peace in the first batch of women to be appointed to the Bench. On the morning of May 11, Mr Pearson, our Chief Constable, sent for me and told me I must stop what I was doing immediately : it was illegal and I ran the risk of losing my seat on the Bench—and no doubt I

should have done so if the strike had lasted another day. I was speaking at a meeting in March, a railway centre, when a pencilled note was handed to me. "The General Council has decided to terminate the strike". I couldn't believe it and for a moment stared at the crowded meeting, stunned. After I made the announcement, I added, "But you may be certain the miners won't give in, so pass round the hat, they'll need all the money we can give them and all the moral support." For the next six months we all went around wearing miner's lamps in our lapels, running jumble sales, concerts, plays, whist-drives, dances—anything we could think of to help those splendid men.

The most heartening thing about it was that there seemed no political divisions in those days. Everyone sympathised with the miners—no one went about calling them 'lazy bastards.' I could screw money out of the most unlikely pockets. The Prince of Wales, afterwards Edward VIII, contributed to the fund and the King, rapidly beginning to be regarded by the nation as the Father of his People, took a quiet but positive part in preventing needless provocation. He caused an immediate protest to be addressed to the War Office, following an announcement in the Gazette about the possible use of troops. He dissuaded the Cabinet from introducing a Bill as they had intended to do prohibiting the use of Trade Union Funds for the benefit of the miners, and he saw no objection to Russian Trade Unions making contributions to the British Miners' Relief Fund.

It came to an end in November. The owners had picked off the District Committees one at a time, forcing new agreements on the men, reducing wages and re-introducing the eight hour day. It left a legacy of bitterness which was not healed until the nationalisation of the mines under the Labour Government in 1946. For many of us it was a time of disillusion, of non-faith. Political action had failed and now it seemed industrial action was hopeless.

But I was not left long without a job. One evening I had a call from Clara Rackham. Susan Lawrence was staying with her, and would I come to dinner the next evening; Susan had a proposition to put to me. Although the Insurance Act covered women as well as men, women were almost completely unorganised. What could we do about it, 'we' meaning Susan and me? According to Susan, there were only two large groups of women workers in Cambridge—laundry workers and the girls

who went out to Histon to work in Chivers' jam factory. "You've forgotten a large group of women who live and work right here in the town," I said. "They've no Trade Board to protect them and the wages the colleges pay them are a scandal. Many of them are widows, and they and their children would starve if it weren't for the crumbs that fall from the rich men's tables."

Susan looked startled at the bitterness of my tone, and at the strange thought that floated into her mind.

"You can't mean the 'bedders'," she said. "You couldn't possibly organise them, any more than you could organise domestic servants."

"I could," I said. "I taught their children at New Street, and I've several in my present school—all there because they're suffering from malnutrition. If you want me to organise women that's where I start." And I did.

Maggie Bondfield sent down an organiser from her Union to help, and together with our newly-formed Women's Section we delivered leaflets to the bed-makers as they left the colleges :

Do you want your grievances redressed
Then come and hear Leah Manning at
St Columba's Hall on Tuesday evening
at 8 p.m.
Buns and coffee.

The room was crowded and a resolution was passed unanimously asking the central offices of the union to formulate a wages demand and send it to the appropriate University body. We also asked that a deputation should be received, so that the women might state their case.

To our surprise, the request for a deputation was acceded to and fixed for the following week in the Combination Room at Sidney Sussex. We made no secret of our plans, indeed we wanted publicity and I gave all the facts to an interested Press. In the course of our interview, I said something about a 'sympathetic don'. We met on Market Square and, with banners flying, proceeded in an orderly procession to the College. The next issue of *Granta* had a cartoon of our procession, accompanied by 'The Sympathetic Don', tears pouring down his cheeks.

What a surprise awaited us!

"We're the deputation," I informed the college porter. "We're expected in the Combination Room."

"Deputation's already in," he announced laconically.

"In! That's impossible. We *are* the deputation."

"Gyps' deputation," he said with a broad grin.

Men!

Our publicity had been a mistake. We should have kept things quiet. The gyps had forestalled us and arranged for a deputation on their own, but not with the assistance of anything so vulgar as a trade union.

"All right, we'll wait," I said. We went and sat on the stairs leading to the Combination Room. We could hear the buzz of voices within. We knocked on the door—no response. There was only one way to let them know we had not gone away. We began to sing—quite softly, and very respectable ballads. I was so furious myself, I felt more like singing, 'Oh it's my delight on a dirty night to shoot the bourgeoisie'.

But bedders are highly respectable ladies. I had already led them far enough from the straight and narrow path. They had their gentlemen to attend to and they began to melt away. However they rode in on the backs of the gyps with increases all round. Honour was satisfied, for we were able to tell the men that it was the determination of the women that had won the rise. They would never have had the courage to set the ball rolling.

Encouraged by this success, the landladies organised a meeting which they asked me to address; then the laundry workers also, many of whom were employed by the University. Not so long ago a paragraph appeared in the *Observer*, enthusiastically describing the formation, 'for the first time', of a Trade Union for college workers in Cambridge. I wrote a letter correcting this mistake, but it was not published, although the Editor wrote that he found it 'amusing'. I am sure he did not believe me. I often wonder myself how I had the nerve to negotiate such an unlikely enterprise. But I still have the silver condiment set which my landladies and bedders presented me with, and for years I carried my papers in the attaché case in which they were packed.

I felt I had done enough. But Susan and Maggie were slave-drivers. "What about those gels at Chivers'?" demanded Susan.



The author's great-grandmother,
Susan Tappin



The author as a V.A.D., 1914

The author with 'Bedders', 1926





Jubilee President, 1930

"Then you'll have to help," I said. "The only time we can catch them is in their dinner hour and I can't possibly cycle out to Histon and back and address a meeting and try to eat my lunch between mid-day and two o'clock, and I don't propose to be back late at school for you or anyone else. You'll have to get transport."

Meekly Susan agreed. At first I thought we were going to have a repetition of our triumph in the Town, for our first meeting was a great success. I wish I'd taken a snap of Susan, perched on a window-sill, stiff collar, man-tailored suit, and a monocle screwed in her eye. I went around distributing membership forms, for I knew I wouldn't be allowed to address the meeting. Susan would never let me speak on the same platform as herself, even in her famous bye-election, although we were such good friends. But she spoke most effectively and the girls were fascinated by her appearance, so different from the typical labour leaders of those days. She told them about her work on the Sugar Confectionery Trade Board, and the work she'd just been doing in Norwich among the women working in the chocolate factories. "Now," she concluded, "I shall come back next week; talk things over together and I hope by then all you gels will have filled up the membership forms; we must get one-hundred per cent and then we'll do great things for you."

But Chivers, that good Christian family, got the better of us. When we turned up at the factory gates the next week, there wasn't a sign of life; not a girl in sight. They had been locked in. Susan stormed; said it was illegal and, when we learned later that girls who joined the Union would be deprived of their dowries, threatened to take legal action. She never did; it would have made interesting trade union history, but I don't suppose her contention that dowries paid to girls when they left on marriage was deferred pay, would have carried much weight in the Courts.

As recompense for my labours, Susan engineered me on to the County Insurance Committee and its sub-committee dealing with tuberculosis—a strange reward, since I wasn't exactly looking for more work. But it brought me one extremely interesting experience. Our T.B. Officer was Dr Varrier Jones, a great pioneer in his own line of work. He discussed with me his view that men suffering from T.B., most of whom had contracted the disease during the war, should lead as normal a

life as possible. "Don't shut them away from their families in sanatoria; let them work as far as their capacity will allow in suitable work-shops—work, and knowledge that one is still useful, is the finest therapy of all." Commonplace now, but almost unheard of at that time. He was afraid that he might meet with opposition from the trade unions unless the idea was explained to them with sympathy. Could I arrange a meeting of the Trades Council and ask him to address it?

Feeling that this project might need the help of some of our women members, like Clara Rackham and Agnes Ramsey, I persuaded Jim Overton to convene a special meeting of the Trades Council and Labour Party to allow Dr Varrier Jones to explain his ideas. I need have had no anxieties. His Welsh eloquence and his human approach won the unanimous support of all our members—Labour and Trade Union alike. Out of this meeting grew Papworth, 'the village with the ever-open windows' and Papworth Industries.

I had been so busy organising other people into their unions that I was in danger of neglecting my own. I was the secretary of the Cambridge Local Association of the N.U.T. but had refused repeated requests to stand as Executive Member for East Anglia. Partly, I didn't want to displace dear old Agnes Broome, who had served us for so long and was near retiring age, but mostly, with great sadness, I had begun to realise that Caroline was far from well. Kate, our maid, at last plucked up courage to say, "You know ma'am, I'm devoted to Mrs Caroline and I don't like to go against her wishes but she tells me she doesn't feel too good, but I'm on no account to worry you." I knew it only too well.

For some time we had been taking her breakfast to her in bed, so I seized the opportunity of getting her doctor to come and give her an examination one morning before I set off for school. My worst fears were realised, but he didn't advise an operation at her age.

"She loves this place and you and her son, let her end her days quietly here. I will see she doesn't suffer too much pain," he counselled.

We had a little orchard on the other side of Madingley Road where Will was carrying out some experiments, with chickens, on the Mendelian Law. Every day he would take her across. She loved the chickens and called them all by Christian names.

And there with our two dogs and the cat on her knee she slept away the summer and left us, just as peacefully, in October.

Miss Broome was due to retire the following Easter, so my association set about getting nominations for me, and when Easter came I slipped easily into her seat with very little opposition, a seat I retained until I became President of the Union and then a Member of Parliament.

It was fortunate that I had that six months in which to consider some reorganisation of our home, for Kate was leaving the following summer to marry. It was necessary to find a good housekeeper before that happened. I had tremendous luck. One Saturday afternoon I was in the orchard, shutting up the chickens, when Kate came running. "A lady to see you," she called.

"A lady," I queried, "did she give her name?"

"Miss Wing, I think she said, and that it was important."

I answered that I wouldn't be many minutes, and as soon as I'd finished my job ran across to the Observatory and found our visitor waiting in the study—a petite brunette with very beautiful grey eyes.

"My name is Madge Wing," she said, as I entered the room. "I believe you're looking for a housekeeper."

Delighted, I asked if she could recommend someone.

"Actually, I was wishing to apply for the post myself," she said rather hesitantly.

"Well really, I'm afraid it's a working housekeeper I need," I said rather doubtfully. "Have you any experience of such a post?"

"Well, not exactly," she answered, "but I have my own house and I can assure you I'm a very good cook. Perhaps you would let me stay and cook your dinner this evening."

It was a most astonishing way of working oneself into a job. I was amused as well as intrigued. I took her at her word. The dinner she cooked for us was excellent, yet there was too much of a mystery to make a snap decision. I thought I had better see her home and said I would call on her on Monday afternoon when I would have discussed the matter with my husband. Will was disgusted that I hadn't nailed her on the spot. His contribution to the dilemma was that we should engage Miss Wing to do all the cooking and that when Kate left, we'd get a daily to do the rough work.

Her little house in Northampton Street was immaculate. I knew I ought to ask for references, but I had a strange reluctance to do so. It wasn't necessary. Madge gave me all the information I needed, quite voluntarily.

"I've only lived in this house since my divorce," she said and seemed to think I would know all about it. As soon as she gave me her married name I recognised her as having been involved in a *cause célèbre*. I was sure Will would never forgive me if I turned down such an exhilarating proposition.

Madge lived two lives—she was devoted to us and our service, but kept her own individuality. She retained her own little house in Northampton Street which she visited most afternoons and where she entertained her many relatives and friends. On Saturday evenings she had a standing engagement to sing and play the piano at her local—a professional engagement which added usefully to her income.

I had always had a bit of a conscience about my father-in-law. Taciturn and very rude to most people, he had been courteous and kind to me. At Caroline's funeral he had seemed a pathetic and lonely elderly gentleman. Although Will was as anxious as I was that he should not live alone any longer, I was dubious about Madge.

Very tactfully, I asked her if she would mind an addition to the family. She looked a little unhappy and asked doubtfully who would look after it while I was at school, as she had very little experience. I stared at her. Then I realised that she had jumped to the most likely conclusion. "No such luck, I'm afraid, Madge," I said. "No, we are thinking of asking Mr Manning senior to come and live with us."

"Oh, but I love old gentlemen!" she exclaimed. "I shall love looking after him and we can play cribbage in the evenings." For one wild moment I was visited by the fantastic idea that I might be getting myself a new mother-in-law. Far from it. Madge called him Daddy, treated him with kindness and respect, bore with his tantrums and, when he finally took to his bed, nursed him devotedly to the end.

How grateful I was to have this reliable yet gay woman as part of the family, for things were changing for me. It was the end of one epoch in my life and the beginning of another.

VI

A Lost Year and its Sequel

A FEW WEEKS' rest after the hectic election of 1918 might have put me on my feet, but there was another job to my hand and I felt an inner compulsion to take it on. Staying with us for the election was an old friend, Wilfrid Wellock, Secretary of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. The schools were closed because of the 'flu epidemic, and he persuaded me that I had a duty to go to Germany; that children were dying as a result of our blockade and that the Quakers, who were organising feeding for the children of Berlin, were terribly short-handed. I had sufficient German to make myself understood and would have no difficulties, since he could arrange everything through his organisation.

Will and Caroline thought the change would do me good and, for myself, the thought of working for reconciliation seemed more important than anything else. How glad I was, in the coming years, that I had taken this opportunity of getting to know intimately some German families, even though as a result my health was impaired for a time. The people with whom F.O.R. had arranged my stay in Berlin were a grand family. Frau Grottewitz was a widow; her husband, a well-known naturalist, and loved by everyone because of his popular column of nature notes in one of the daily papers, had died during the war 'of a broken heart' said the old *Grossmutter*, who lived with the family. There were two sons and two daughters, but on my first visit the eldest son, Harry, a doctor, was still a prisoner of war awaiting his release.

The blockade as a weapon of war was more terrible than any of us could have guessed, especially for the children. That is why I accepted the view that the morale of the German army was undermined by letters from home. Match-stick legs and arms, and grotesque swollen bellies were everywhere. But I never saw a dirty or untidy child come to 'Quakka feeding'. The

German hausfrau was pathetic in her endeavour to patch and mend, so that often there seemed more patch than original garment.

Every day I went out to the Quaker camp at the Wannsee. In the evenings, the Grottewitz apartment was full of political discussion, Jews and Socialists drinking ersatz coffee and building the New Jerusalem. Among the many well-known people I met was Rosa Luxemburg. I found her quite different from the fierce revolutionary she had been painted, full of fun and a bit of a comic. She had loved the dead father because, she said, he was able to make botany, her subject, simple and lovable for the simple, lovable German people. Although I went back year after year to Berlin, I never saw Rosa again. She was murdered during a year when I was *hors de combat*.

What then happened to the New Jerusalem? I don't know what we expected from the Treaty of Versailles with its punitive, vindictive clauses, but I'm certain ninety per cent of ordinary folk agreed with Eric Geddes that we should 'squeeze Germany till the pips squeaked'. Even Maynard Keynes' *Economic Consequences of the Peace* failed to convince, for conviction needed economic insight. Only those who watched, on the spot and with growing unease, the build-up of the menacing forces which led to the tragic end of the Weimar Republic, saw their worst fears realised.

For the next fourteen summers, until I was declared *persona non grata*, I spent my holidays with the Grottewitz family. The early years were happy enough. We walked in the Black Forest, stayed on the Island of Rugen and swam effortlessly in the tideless Baltic, searching the beach for bits of amber; we cruised on the Rhine, eating grapes and drinking wine, and visited our favourite cities, especially Dresden. Only the old lady grumbled incessantly about the Junkers and the Reichswehr, whilst the whole family treated contemptuously Hitler's riff-raff German Workers' Party and his Munich revolution in 1923, which landed him in jail. Bred in the bone socialists, they wrote off his attempt to camouflage his party as anti-capitalist, for what it was worth.

But year by year I saw how pessimism grew in this middle-class family and their socialist friends. They had worked so tirelessly to establish democracy, to preach the gospel of the Weimar Constitution. Now unemployment, growing inflation,

more and more ersatz food, and the growing senility of Hindenburg, seemed to be opening the way to what they most feared. The Reichstag was becoming a farce. It passed no laws and the old man was a puppet in the hands of the contending powers who sought to replace him. Only during the two years when Brüning was in power did they see any hope. This was a general opinion. When I was myself a Member of Parliament, in 1931, I met Herr Braun, the Socialist and Trade Union leader. He had talked with a group of us about the reparations problem which he thought Herr Brüning was on the point of settling. I took the opportunity of telling him that I visited Berlin every summer. He was delighted to know that I stayed with the Grottewitz family: like all socialists he had loved and admired Pappa Grottewitz. He invited me to have dinner with him in the Reichstag. But by the next year Hindenburg had got rid of Herr Braun; and by the year after the Reichstag had gone up in flames.

Von Papen, who had succeeded Brüning, was very unpopular in the country but in accordance with the Constitution he had to call an election on assuming the Chancellorship. I had only just arrived in Berlin for my summer visit. Excitement was intense: in the 1930 elections Hitler had secured 107 seats in the Reichstag, and during the next two years, in spite of (perhaps because of) Brüning's decision to outlaw the Brown Shirts and put them off the streets, Hitler's surge towards power was tremendous and frightening. He received nearly 14,000,000 votes and a majority in the Reichstag. Harry had recently married a charming young Jewish girl and together we went down to the Reichstag to see the new Members arriving. The crowds were dense and as each new Nazi victor arrived ferocious howls of joy nearly broke our ear drums. Then a car drove through the gate. To shouts and jeers of "Papen! Papen," we fought our way out of the crowd and back to the peace of the flat.

But not for long. Harry was in a restless mood. "Come on," he said, "we'll go down to the Kurfurstendamm." Until that evening he had always been against my visiting any of the night clubs in that unsavoury district. It represented the other side of Germany's sick society—a hectic, febrile clutching at straws that might make life a little less unbearable. Lesbianism was popular. The papers were full of advertisements from women for girl friends and the clubs in Kurfurstendamm were the best

places for pick-ups. It wasn't a neighbourhood any woman would visit without intent unless she had a male escort. Women, impeccably dressed in evening male attire, were to be seen dancing with fragile, clinging little creatures, whilst out on the pavements young creeps prowled waiting for someone with whom they might spend a profitable night. If there was anything for Hitler to clear up it was this pitiable trade. And he did. He put woman right back where he thought she belonged. The three K's (*Kinder, Kuche, Kirche*) of pre-war days were mild by comparison. Trained and educated women had to give up their posts to less well-qualified men. He organised The Women's Labour Service so that without a certificate of attendance at a special camp, it was impossible to get a job of any kind. In return what did he promise? A faithful Nazi husband, a home and four children, the Nazi ideal of perfect Aryan womanhood.

Confused accounts of what was happening reached me in letters from Harry during the next few months. My old friend Herr Braun was thrown out, together with other socialist leaders. "Why," I asked in a letter, "didn't the Social Democrats call a general strike?" They had lost heart. This was bad enough, but worse was to follow. The Nazis and the Communists had joined forces and brought off an incredible coup—a Berlin traffic strike. Voting together in the Reichstag they defeated von Papen, and his place was taken by Schleicher, of whom, curiously enough, Harry seemed to think rather well. I had been working all the year for refugees from Nazi oppression and letters from my friends had now become so nervous that, with some trepidation, I decided to go once more to Berlin to see if there was any way I could help the family. I found everything changed: the old *Grossmutter* was dead; Kathe had married a member of the Russian Trade Delegation and gone back with him to Russia; Nils, the younger son, had joined the S.S. "He had no choice," Tante Lisl said in tears, "everyone had to in his firm, to keep their jobs. Things are very bad for us. Harry is losing much of his practice and his poor little wife lives in a state of terror." This I was soon to see for myself. I had gone to their flat for *Abendessen*. And as we sat in their cosy little *biedermeier* room, sipping our ersatz coffee, the steady tramp of marching feet came down the street. Greta sprang up, white and shaking, and pulled the curtains across the window. She burst into hysterical tears. She had cause, for the over-

whelming Nazi victory in the spring was succeeded by the terrible persecution of the Jews, and Greta was a Jewess.

She begged me to help them to get away. "You have already helped many whom you did not know and we are your friends." Harry, pale but composed, broke in, "You must go back; go back to England at once, tomorrow. It is dangerous for us to be seen with you—dangerous for you too, perhaps. We have money and friends who can help us to get to Switzerland, but we should be glad of your help after that. We want to go to America—as far away from these bloody Nazis as possible."

Since they could accomplish the first part of their escape on their own initiative, it was all plain sailing. I acted as sponsor for them, and by Christmas of that year they were safe in the States. In 1947 I rang them up from New York. Harry had a flourishing practice; Greta worked all through the long summers as leader in one of those children's camps so popular in the States. Were they happy? I don't really think so. Indeed I have never known a German in America who did not long for his own homeland.

I must now go back in time and explain why it was that I did not return to Berlin the year after the 'Quakka Feeding' adventure. The long years of privation and hard work during the war, my efforts during the Khaki Election and the emotional visit to Germany had taken their toll even of my robust constitution. My cough was so persistent that Will insisted on my seeing my doctor. Very gently he told me I had a spot on my lung, and that it would be some months before I could go back to school. He secured me a little garden hut and gave me complete reassurance about my return to health. Although I didn't say so, I was glad of the rest and Caroline's fussing. I found time to read, and discovered Gerard Manley Hopkins, in a volume which my Vicar brought me. It took me some little time to get used to his strange rhythms and metaphors, and I would turn with relief to the easy voluptuous verse of Swinburne and Keats; to Browning, and to Shakespeare's Sonnets. In time not only the strange beauty, but the mysticism behind the beauty made its appeal. I found great comfort in Gerard Manley Hopkins' poetry at that time and have often found his credo something to rely upon since.

I have had good fortune beyond most people, but never

more so than when I have struck a bad patch, as in 1920. There has always been someone with a strong right arm to help me overcome my misfortune. Two people stand out in my memory from those months—our kind, considerate Dr Searle, with his never-failing solicitude, and Mr Jenkins, the Secretary to the Education Committee. He often came along to the Observatory to see me and, just before Dr Searle told me I could go back to school, he brought me some splendid news. During the latter part of the war, I had been transferred from New Street to a large girls' school, as temporary head, while the elderly headmistress was incapacitated with a fractured hip. Now she had returned to duty. I wasn't really looking forward to my post as an assistant at New Street. Quite apart from demotion, I was a little apprehensive about the effect of a large class, in a slum area, on my still somewhat precarious state of health.

"Dr Searle tells me your trouble has quite cleared up and you can return to school," he began. "The Health Committee have been discussing the matter and we agree that New Street is not suitable. Dr Dalton and Mrs Alan Gray want to try an experiment with a number of children in the Borough who, as a result of the war, are below par. The L.E.A. has bought a small farm in Vinery Road and we are going to try an Open Air School there. Would you like to take charge of it?" He smiled broadly. "We know how interested you are in children suffering from malnutrition." This was really heaping coals of fire on my head, but the Committee had long ago forgiven my indiscretion.

I was overjoyed, and in May began my work with 20 children, a cook and one assistant teacher. The farmhouse was the administrative block and in the orchard there were three open-sided sheds which could be pivoted round either to catch the sun or afford protection from the wind. They served as two classrooms and a dining room. Such schools are commonplace now, but nearly half a century ago they were a great experiment in the world of education. Our first summer was glorious and when Nurse came once a week to bath and weigh the children, a gain of a quarter of an ounce on some skinny frame was regarded as a triumph. Sun and air and three good meals a day can work miracles.

I didn't want to close the school for the August holiday, and after that year I never did, the staff taking their long holi-

day in turn; but some initial alterations had to be made to the administrative block, so we closed down and I took myself off to a clinic in Switzerland to study the technique of sun treatment and have a good check-up on my own health. The next year we put the children into short pants from May to October. Mahogany-coloured, they acquired a fine protection from winter chills.

The school was a complete success from the first day, and after some years the L.E.A. opened a grand new school for delicate children, off Chesterton Road. Later they added a block for children who were at that time called Mentally Deficient, but now go by the much kinder name, Educationally Sub-normal. I became the first headmistress and was tremendously happy in my work. I remained there until I entered the House of Commons and cannot think now why I gave up something so worthwhile and fulfilling for the frustrating life of politics.

VII

I Change Course

THERE ARE TIMES when life seems like a bowl of cherries. Except for one disappointment, *my* life was certainly full and happy for the next few years. I had been elected to the Chair of my Union in 1929. This is a signal honour and does not come to one, as in the Labour Party, by seniority, but by the votes of every member in the country. In the fifty years' history of the N.U.T., there had only been three other woman Presidents, so perhaps I had cause to feel elated.

It was an important year for education. There was to be a review of salaries, a new Education Bill and, with Sir Charles Trevelyan at the Ministry, an effort to solve the long-outstanding problem of religious instruction. My job meant constant travelling, constant conferences at the Ministry, and there were times when I longed for the peaceful, rewarding work at my Open Air School in Cambridge. Then why was I tempted away from it? That is a question I have asked myself many times and always come up with the same answer. I made a mistake. I gave up work I loved and at which I was successful for work to which I was not suited. I am a political animal, but I am not a politician. I love and understand the political scene, I enjoy a political fight—but not the House of Commons, with its frustrations and the impossibility of making things happen the way one wants them to happen. Perhaps too I have faults of personality. I am too vulnerable, and am without the ambition and drive that takes one out of the humdrum life of a back-bencher to any post of responsibility, such as I had enjoyed as a Head Teacher and later as Head of a Department in my Union.

How did it all come about? The N.U.T., like most Unions, had a panel of Parliamentary candidates. Priding itself on its political neutrality, the panel consisted of three representatives from each of the political parties and one woman irrespective of

Party. Until 1928, no woman's name had been included, the excuse being that there was no woman on the executive with sufficient political experience. That excuse was no longer valid. I had held every office in my local party and was a well-known speaker at both I.L.P. and Labour Party conferences. So my name was included.

At that time several of the so-called 'white collar workers' were meeting to discuss our common problems, particularly our pension schemes. Among these was the Union of Postal Workers, whose General Secretary was a personal friend. After one of our meetings he asked me to have lunch with him, as he wanted to have a very confidential talk with me. First he asked me if it was right that I was on my Union's list of Parliamentary candidates. I told him that I was and had already been approached by several constituencies, who had taken my name from the Party's 'B List', but that none of them seemed to offer a reasonable chance of success.

"Would you be prepared to wait beyond the General Election to a bye-election, if it meant one of the safest seats in the country?" he asked me and went on to explain that the U.P.W. Member for Bristol East was seriously ill, but naturally their Executive didn't wish to add to his anxiety by telling him he couldn't stand at the forthcoming General Election. They would contest the seat on his behalf and hope he might go on for several months, perhaps even a year or more. Although my friend didn't say so categorically, I gained the impression that some kind of bargain had been struck between the U.P.W. and the constituency. Bristol East would continue to be represented by a much-loved and greatly respected member, although for all practical purposes he was an absentee member, provided the U.P.W. would find them a prospective candidate with good financial backing. Since they were cutting down their own panel, it meant looking elsewhere. "I always had you in mind," he added.

As a matter of fact, such an arrangement suited me. I had felt a great reluctance to leave my school and would be glad to defer the parting until the last possible moment; moreover I wanted to finish my year as President of the Union, an honour I wouldn't have exchanged for any seat in Parliament, but by Union rules I could not combine the two. Now, it seemed, a way out was being offered to me.

At that time it was possible for local associations of the N.U.T. to be affiliated to local trades councils and I made my first contacts with Bristol East through an old friend, St John Read, modern language master at Clifton College and a member of our National Association of Labour Teachers. The situation required considerable tact. It would have been insensitive to let the local people think I was waiting for a bye-election (something not entirely unknown among aspirants for a seat in Parliament). At the same time it was necessary that I should be more than a name in Bristol. I started out with one advantage: my paternal great-grandfather, who was a planter in Jamaica, had considerable business interests in Bristol, and had died there whilst on holiday with his two young daughters. One of them had promptly married my grandfather, a Bristolian, and for some years had carried on the family business in the city; my maiden name was therefore well known, and I found this a useful opening gambit at meetings. St John Read arranged several meetings for me with women's organisations and also an education rally.

Although I could make a rousing political speech and was well known throughout the movement, I had no illusions as to why I should be the most-favoured candidate when the bye-election was announced—I was exceedingly well supported. My union would pay every penny of my election expenses and continue to nurse the constituency for so long as I was their choice, whether in or out of the House, which meant that the agent's salary would always be safe. But for that fact, my name would never have appeared on the short list when a bye-election was announced for such a safe seat.

St John Read at once set about getting nominations from affiliated organisations and the agent wrote asking me to come to Bristol immediately to plan the campaign. "It's in the bag," he wrote. "The only real competition will come from local T.U. candidates—there are two short-listed and they'll cut one another's throats."

I went to Bristol at the week-end, and St John Read met me at Temple Meads Station looking anxious and worried. "A snag has come up," he greeted me. "Uncle Arthur wants the seat for some lawyer—chap called Cripps."

"Oh, we needn't worry about that," I returned blithely, "we'll easily beat him; never heard of him, and don't suppose anyone else has."

But we could not ignore him. At the time I was furiously angry, indignant that Arthur Henderson should interfere. A fight began between us: a peremptory note from Transport House ordered me to withdraw my name from the short list, and an equally peremptory answer from me stated that I had no intention of doing so and that, in any event, my Union would not allow me to do so in favour of a person of no standing in the movement.

The N.U.T. had every reason to be annoyed. I might have got in at the General Election had I not waited for Bristol East, and we were desperately in need of good teacher-representation in the House at the time. The Scurr amendment to Sir Charles Trevelyan's Bill had deferred, for the time being, all chance of raising the school-leaving age to fifteen. I had been a party, in the first months of 1930, to all the conversations between the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church, the Free Churches and the Local Authorities on some form of Enabling Amendment to the Bill. The result of these conversations was a White Paper setting out a summary of proposals, the essence of which was that L.E.A.s should be permitted to give financial assistance to Voluntary Schools for the purpose of re-organisation; and in exchange they would allow an extension of public control in the matter of the appointment and removal of teachers. My sympathy with the position of Voluntary Schools was well known, and the Union counted on my help in a matter which was a triumph for compromise and commonsense. The revised School Attendance Bill, which received its Second Reading on May 29, contained many valuable features for our Voluntary Schools as well as providing maintenance grants for children between the ages of fourteen and fifteen.

The subsequent muddles and deferments, and the final loss of the Bill, which was thrown out in the Lords, might have been avoided; at least it need not have been a total loss if our teacher representation in the House had been stronger and more authoritative. But much of that was in the future. It led to the resignation of Trevelyan and the appointment of Lees-Smith, a man entirely without strength in this controversial matter and regarded by the teachers as a black-leg Minister.

So I was encouraged by the Union to continue my fight, and I remained adamant until Hugh Dalton was sent to soften me up personally. He needed to use only one simple phrase,

"Uncle Arthur asks me to tell you that he will make this a test of your loyalty to the Party." Loyalty to the Party, to my friends, to institutions, had been a guiding principle all my life. Those words broke my stubborn resistance; they also broke my heart, for I had counted on Hugh supporting me all the way in my fight. I can remember only a very few times when I have given way to tears—this was one of them.

Hugh was very gentle, very kind, quite unlike his usual boisterous, extrovert self. But not until I had given way did he offer me the bribe. "Uncle Arthur asks me to promise you that he will use his authority to see that you get the next bye-election!"

How cunning of Hugh! He knew me well enough to be certain that if he had offered me the bribe before the loyalty test, I would have stuck it out.

As to why the Party wanted the seat for Cripps, Dalton sets out the matter clearly in his second volume of memoirs, *The Fateful Years* :

Stafford Cripps was then unknown in the Party and had never fought an election, although he had been adopted rather reluctantly, and without much hope of success, as Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for West Woolwich. Apart from Jowitt the Labour Party was short of good lawyers in the House of Commons. When therefore the post of Solicitor General fell vacant in 1930 it seemed best to look outside the House for a successor. No doubt too, Lord Parmoor, Cripps' father, a much-respected elderly member of the Cabinet, spoke up for his son. But it took all Arthur Henderson's authority and influence, then very great, to persuade the Constituency Labour Party in East Bristol to adopt this unknown young lawyer in preference to better known Trade Unionists.

I was the only well-known Unionist on the short list.

It was not long before Hugh Dalton, Arthur Henderson and many others, including Bristol East, bitterly regretted the choice of Stafford Cripps for that safe seat. As Solicitor General during the remaining months of that disastrous year, he was quiet and effective as I remember, but a bit dull. But after 1931 he began to behave erratically. At a time when the Party needed to gather all its shattered forces in a great effort of unity and

comradeship, he did his damndest to sow discord, disunity and antagonism towards the Party leadership. Dalton wrote of him, "Cripps is most depressing. He has no political judgment at all and suffers from adolescent Marxist miasma—it may become a duty to prevent him from holding any influential office in the Party."*

Certainly the Bristol East Constituency Party realised he had entered upon a course of conduct which might have done irretrievable harm to the Party nationally. I was often invited by our regional woman organiser to speak in Bristol. The agent never missed an opportunity of saying, "And this is the M.P. we might have had representing us."

However, we threw him out of the Party at Southport, although he managed to creep back in time for our smashing victory in 1945. I have often tried to analyse the motives for my active dislike of Cripps. Was it because of Bristol East? I do not think so. As far as I know he was quite an innocent party in the manoeuvres which went on. But he was sanctimonious. He always seemed to do the obviously wrong thing, such as voting against sanctions at the time of the Abyssinian crisis. He was prepared to tell the expedient lie. Now one can forgive Harold Wilson, or Jim Callaghan, or George Brown—they are politicians and never set up a 'holier than thou' attitude. But when Cripps publicly denied that he had devaluation in mind, and then devalued within a few days, I felt that that was unforgivable behaviour in one who professed complete probity in public life.

The feeling against him was so tense in Bristol East that he risked losing nomination for the 1950 General Election, unless he attended the selection conference. I well remember the consternation over this situation on the front bench, which was communicated to me by Dalton. Attlee had to take a very firm line.

That the dislike was mutual I have no doubt. It showed itself in many ways, when later we both sat in the House together from 1945 to 1950.

I now had to set to work to repair the damage that had been done to N.U.T. prestige and to my own political prospects. My presidential year was a strenuous one. Sir Charles attended

* *The Fateful Years.*

the Bournemouth Conference and, at the end, invited me to become a member of his Departmental Committee enquiring into private schools. It was an interesting and amusing committee and revealed some appalling conditions in many such establishments. It recommended that in future all private schools should be registered. Unfortunately registration only referred to the physical conditions under which the children were taught—not to how they were taught, or who taught them—and it has taken many years to control private schools academically. It is ironical that I should be ending my career teaching English, R.I. and History in an 'Independent Day and Boarding School for Girls'.

There was an amusing coincidence concerning my membership of the Departmental Committee. Among my colleagues was a young M.P. for whom I conceived a great admiration, his contributions to our discussions were so sincere and to the point. We struck up a friendship based on a joke—that we were distant relatives since we were both descendants from families that had been refugees from France after The Edict of Nantes. When we met in the committee after my nomination for East Islington was announced, he approached me with a rather sad smile. "Fighting inside the family," he said, "I am afraid you're going to be beaten." His name was Victor Cazalet. He died a tragic and useless death about which there still hangs an air of mystery. My opponent in East Islington was Thelma Cazalet—his sister.

"When is this bribe of Arthur Henderson's going to be paid?" the General Secretary asked me. We had been watching the progress of Sir Charles's Bill through the House with great anxiety. It seemed doomed. The arguments which are going on today regarding help for the Voluntary Schools are strangely reminiscent of those we heard over and over again forty years ago. There is a hard dogmatic attitude in those who oppose such help, which has always seemed to me strangely unchristian, something like the arguments one hears against ecumenical approaches.

I was away speaking at a meeting in Wellingborough when a telephone message came through asking me to return to London at once in connection with a bye-election. From his point of view, Uncle Arthur's pledge had been paid in full, but East Islington certainly wasn't much of an exchange for East Bristol, and the prospect of winning any seat for Labour just then was

extremely remote. The seat had been won by a tiny majority in 1929, by Dr Ethel Bentham, an elderly lady who had fought the seat unsuccessfully at every election since the end of the war. At last she had won a victory and had died suddenly a few months later. There is no doubt that Arthur Henderson used similar persuasive tactics—in this case the need to have a teacher in the House during the passage of the Education Bill—as he had used about a lawyer at East Bristol. I was told later that the Constituency Party were disgusted at having to fight an election—difficult in any circumstances—with a ‘school-marm’ as their candidate. I don’t know what happened to dispel their doubts and turn them into the most enthusiastic, loyal body of supporters with whom any candidate was ever blessed. Of one thing I am sure, they didn’t want to let down the doctor ‘bless ‘er’ for whom they had a deep affection and respect.

Transport House put in their own London organiser to plan the campaign, but I was nonplussed when the first thing he said to me was, “Keep away from the office for a few days—a candidate is only a nuisance until the organisation is well under way.” So I provided myself with a list of key people and spent the time visiting and making friends with the men and women who stand for most in the political, social and religious life of a great London Borough. Among them was Donald Soper. I learned much about Islington and its ways during that week: it was not typical of London Boroughs—it seemed to have a soul and personality of its own like the village it must once have been. Grave and dignified mansions, housing three and four families, jostled rows of tiny villas. In the great days of Islington Green these dilapidated, tumble-down habitations had been gracious and beautiful.

When at last I thought I might make a few discreet enquiries at the central committee rooms, the agent informed me that my job now was to get my personality across. He also gave me a piece of information which sent my hopes rocketing: Lord Beaverbrook was on the rampage, not so much to defeat Labour as to discomfit the Tories, and by putting up a fourth Commonwealth candidate, he had found a way to do it. This was an amazing piece of luck that won the election for me.

By the middle of the second week all the champions had appeared in the lists—a lovely lady, a General, a Major and a school-marm. I had already taken part in many Parliamentary

elections: quiet, orderly ones in Cambridge; the tiring rounds of county constituencies; the white-hot fervour of South Wales; but never before and never since in such a one as was fought in 1931 in East Islington. Circuses, free fights, meetings where every speaker was howled down were the order of the day, but I was fortunate in never having to send for the police. When I looked at the rows of housewives and working men, most of them unemployed and living in the old dilapidated tenement houses, often eating fish and chips out of greasy newspapers, I threw away my carefully prepared speeches about the gold standard and the economic crisis and told them that the policies for which I stood were the simple, homely ones which should appeal to them whatever party they belonged to—a full education for every boy and girl born into an English home, high standard of life and full employment for the parents of those children, decent housing and a zealous prosecution of every plan which would help us towards our great ideals of peace. I was ready to agree that the essential difference between our parties was our method of financing them. I also warned—for the danger ahead was already plain to see—that we should not allow our policies to be dictated by other countries, notably America.

This simple way of putting across my message does not mean that I felt any contempt for the intelligence of my audiences, but these post-war problems were difficult enough for the practised politician to grasp, and I had been told by supporters who had attended some of the meetings held by other candidates that people soon became bored with groping explanations, and meetings therefore broke up in disorder and the police had to be sent for.

I had never crammed so much work into a couple of weeks. Canvassing had to be done, but I hated it and was no good at it, so I devised a plan for mass canvassing. In the biting cold February winds, I stood up in an open car, ringing a hand-bell from street to street, whilst bands of devoted women workers went knocking up the housewives, persuading them to leave their work for a few minutes and come and listen to a short speech or just shake hands with their candidate, then put her picture in the front window. We had many amusing incidents in the course of our canvass. One of my workers was showing a voter a picture of me playing football with one of my

classes. "Good Gawd, poor gal are they all 'er's"—but whether in admiration or commiseration, I am not quite sure. It was an excellent way of getting myself known and usually ended up with a cheery, "Ta-ta dearie, come and see us again when you're our M.P." I was gradually shedding the 'school-marm' legend.

In the afternoons I visited doubtful and wavering cases brought in by our canvassers. This was something I might really have enjoyed but for the constant attention of photographers, who followed me everywhere. I am completely non-photogenic and I detested it. The press conferences which took place over a cup of tea were quite different and I even conceived a feeling of affection for the young men who waited around for the day's story. I expect I was terribly green, because for the first time I learned that one cannot tell a reporter's personal politics from the paper for which he writes.

During the last week, tension was very high and the election became of national interest. There were six or seven meetings every evening, with all the big-wigs in the Party coming down to help, and a letter from Philip Snowden, Chancellor of the Exchequer, which was literally blackmailed out of him, making promises which he knew he couldn't keep—I was ashamed of that business for Snowdon was a man of integrity; but anything goes in an important bye-election!

We finished every evening sitting round the fire in the Central Committee Rooms, often until three in the morning, discussing the day's doings. Then came polling day, a last round to the polling booths, a counting up of the fruits of our labour and the Town Hall at a few minutes after nine o'clock.

A count is always one long agony; I have never again felt the sense of responsibility that I felt at East Islington. A shot in the arm was so badly needed, yet a win for Labour, in the circumstances, seemed an improbable miracle. But I hadn't long to wait. Soon I saw thumbs being turned up at the counting tables; my agent smiling like a cat with a jug of cream, and General Critchley rushing across the room and giving me a resounding kiss—"Something I've wanted to do for days."

The ordeal from the steps of the Town Hall was terrifying. The crowd waiting for the announcement was so thick that mounted police had to be called out. In trying to get to my car, I was swept off my feet. But I had won a resounding victory for Labour and from the fight I had emerged happy

and unscathed, yet, sad to relate, in spite of all my hard work, not one ounce less in weight.

Away in a quiet room in the Observatory, an old man lay fighting off death until he had heard the result. The bye-election had been an enormous excitement for him. "My daughter-in-law's going to be an M.P.," he told his doctor, although the doctor didn't expect him to last the three weeks of the campaign. On polling day he was sinking fast but, stubborn old fen-man to the end, he determined not to die until the results were declared at midnight. He had a small battery-set in his bedroom and, although semi-conscious, kept it on all the evening.

At last! East Islington bye-election result. Labour victory! That was all he wanted to hear. "Good girl, knew she would make it. Proud of her." Then he fell into a quiet slumber and died in his sleep.

VIII

The Crisis Parliament 1929-31

I

I LOST NO time in taking my seat, which after a bye-election is a very daunting experience. After a General Election it is easy. One just walks up with a bunch of colleagues, takes the oath and shakes hands with Mr Speaker. A bye-election member must wait at the Bar of the House during the whole of question-time and until the Orders of the Day have been read, the cynosure of all eyes. Then Mr Speaker asks for Members who wish to take their seats to come to the Table.

The length of the carpet from the Bar to the Speaker's Chair seems interminable as one advances, trying to keep in step with one's sponsors, bowing at the appropriate places and, in my case, listening to Government cheers and Opposition jeers. It was natural that my unexpected victory was infuriating to the Tories. Among the yells I could make out, 'Minority Member', 'The girl that Critchley kissed'—very embarrassing—'What colour d'you call her hair, Ellen?' and Ellen sweetly hissing 'Titian'. No one was out of order, but Mr Speaker, always like his successors very kindly disposed towards me, tried to quell the tumult with a ferocious look.

I arrived at Westminster fresh and euphoric from a totally unexpected bye-election victory, and I walked into an atmosphere which stung like a cold lash. Bitter hostility there was where there should have been comradeship. I was hurt by the cold contempt of old I.L.P. friends, such as Jimmy Maxton, who treated me as a criminal for having dared to stand, let alone win; everywhere I found frustration and defeatism in place of hope and constructive ideas; above all I was filled with dismay by the defection (to the cause of Oswald Mosley, an arrogant, class-conscious aristocrat) of Nye Bevan, who had been my hero.

But I had many advantages. I was given a job in our Union office as Joint Secretary to the Parliamentary Department, which

meant I always had good briefs for the many education debates which came up. But from the first my paramount interest was in foreign affairs and, on the advice of Hugh Dalton, I chose our failures at the League as the theme of my maiden speech. No one warned me that a maiden speech should be non-controversial and I attacked the Chamberlain policy bitterly, to the shocked surprise of the House. Whatever the House thought, I had a good press—even *Punch* gave me a notice, saying that as Chamberlain replied the angel of peace folded its wings and went sadly from the Chamber.

I made many friends, some of them rather unexpected. Jimmy Thomas was one. Much has been said to traduce Jimmy, and certainly at the time of the General Strike I had felt very bitterly against him for the part he played. Nevertheless I found his bonhomie, his ridiculous assumption of ungrammatical speech and weird pronunciation quite fascinating, and I formed the habit of having tea with him two or three times a week. He was always trying to put me on to a good thing. He thought my distrust of stocks and shares amusingly naïve, and I have no doubt that if I had given him small sums of money to invest from time to time, he would have made quite a packet for me. He never lost the opportunity of pointing out to me the chances I had missed.

My friendship with Oliver Baldwin, on the other hand, was quite different. It began because we were both very punctilious in staying throughout all-night sittings. The first part of the night we spent in Annie's Bar; in the deep hours we strolled on the Terrace, the best place in London for feeling the heart-throb of a great city in sleep; we ended up by eating eggs and bacon in the Members' Tea Room. If the debates required our attendance in the Chamber, which happened very often during the critical period of unemployment, we were on hand for divisions. But all-night sittings are a wearisome and stupid routine, and I am surprised that Dick Crossman, usually so fertile in ideas, did not find a way to eliminate them when he was Leader of the House.

On the whole, Oliver didn't care for the company of women; but he startled Attlee at a small farewell dinner, when he was off to take up a Governorship in 1947, by replying to a toast with the words, "Leah Manning is the only woman I ever

wanted to marry, but when I looked at her husband, I hadn't the courage to push him under a bus, he is such a big chap." Our friendship lasted on and off for many years and he was kind enough, although far from well and limping badly, to come to Epping in 1951 to open our Labour Party summer fête and lambast a big crowd who were curious to see the son and heir of a one-time Tory Prime Minister, but who was now himself a socialist.

"Leah Manning was the best M.P. you've ever had or are ever likely to have," he told them. "Why on earth were you such fools as to let her lose this seat?"

Looking back over the years, since women first entered the House, I do not think there has ever been in any one Parliament such a large number of distinguished women as in that of 1929-31. There have perhaps been women who were more outstanding; who have made a bigger impact on public opinion, like Barbara Castle; or shown greater promise, like Shirley Williams; but among my women colleagues in that short-lived Parliament were a number who had already rendered magnificent service to the labour and trade union movements. They brought to the House experience, wisdom and a broad-minded knowledge of those whom they represented. They were all considerably older than me although I had worked with them for many years.

Dr Marion Phillips, Chief Woman Officer of the Labour Party, was a woman of great independence of mind. She ran the Women's Department at Transport House without much reference to anyone else, indeed so much was this the case that on her sad and premature death it was firmly laid down that her successor would be subject to the controlling guidance of the General Secretary. Marian and I were of roughly the same build and whenever we entered Annie's Bar together, that rather lewd-minded but lovable old Member, Ben Tillet (usually to be found there), would call out, "Here comes United Dairies."

Susan Lawrence, stiff-collared, mannish-suited and forever smoking cigarettes, was Parliamentary Secretary at the Ministry of Health. Here her work with Mary MacArthur on the organisation of Trade Boards was of incalculable value. In the sweated trades, where a Trade Board minimum of 2½d an hour was an advance, Susan knew the effect of intolerable poverty on the

health of women workers. Although not an orator like Margaret Bondfield she could marshal her facts with cold logic and drive home a point with devastating effect. "Don't shake your head at me," she scolded Austen Chamberlain. "The Honourable Lady's got nothing else to shake," shouted Ben Tillett, to the shocked delight of Honourable Members and the bewilderment of Susan.

Maggie Bondfield was the star of the woman members. I knew her better than I knew anyone else. She always stayed with us if she was speaking in Cambridge or anywhere near. We were enormously proud of her: not only was she Chairman of the Trade Union Congress, but also our first woman Privy Councillor and Member of the Cabinet. And what a job they gave her! Minister of Labour when there were more than three million unemployed, and when no one knew how to tackle the problem; with America always yapping at our heels, because we at least gave a beggarly pittance to our unemployed whilst their unfortunates were singing on the streets for 'dimes from heaven'. Men politicians are often malicious about their women colleagues, and at that time I heard more than one say, "She's only been given the job because no one else would take it and because she's sure to make a mess of it." In our uncertainty as to what had hit us, in the slump from America and Germany, and our general lack of knowledge of how to deal with an economic and industrial crisis which was world-wide, it is certain no one else could have done any better. Moreover, Jimmy Thomas, George Lansbury and Mosley, who were supposed to be dealing with unemployment, hadn't made a dent in it. How could they, or anyone else, in the circumstances existing at that time?

Ellen Wilkinson was my contemporary. We had been associated for many years as lecturers for the National Council of Labour Colleges and I had a tremendous admiration for her. Her personality was as vivid as her appearance. Although very short and rather plain, one always looked twice at her flaming red hair. Together with her left-wing views (considerably modified later), this earned her the sobriquet of 'Red Ellen'. She was Susan's P.P.S. and Susan, no mean judge of ability, always regarded her as a future Minister. This she became, first in Churchill's war-time ministry and later as Minister of Education in the Attlee administration. Her tragic

death following long periods of illness was a great loss to the movement.

Two other women I remember with love and admiration: Lucy Noel-Buxton who was my close friend until her death, and Cynthia Mosley. I first became friendly with Lucy through her husband. I was a member of the Select Committee on the Hours and Wages of Shop Assistants; Noel-Buxton was our chairman. Lucy had been returned at a bye-election just before me, so we were both strangers to the House; and Noel insisted on taking us to lunch in the Members' Dining Room, with the injunction to eat properly and not live off snacks in the Tea Room. Lucy looked so quiet and prim, but she was the greatest fun and a special favourite of 'Big Ben', the enormous policeman who guarded the Terrace Corridor when later we were elevated (in the 1945 Parliament) to having a Lady Members' Room. In 1930 we worked in a dank, dark dungeon without even a toilet of our own, and a wash-basin with a jug of water and a pail underneath. Lucy was as thin as a lath; I weighed twelve stone; but she could eat course after course of delicious food, whilst I trifled with a salad recommended by Margaret Bondfield who was also trying to keep down her weight. Lucy and I came back again to the House in 1945, but she had been through some difficult family troubles and her husband's increasing ill-health made her decide not to stand again, although her seat in Norwich was tolerably safe. She retired to her house at Frinton and I went to see her just before her death. At that time her courageous daughter was serving a six-month sentence in Holloway for contempt of court—refusing to pledge herself not to take part in future demonstrations at an airfield. Like mother, like daughter!

But Cynthia I don't think I ever spoke to, except once when we both acted as 'tellers' in an unemployment amendment. Nevertheless I regarded her with deep admiration. It must have been a great grief to her to find her husband at such odds with the Party, for she was a sincere socialist herself and displayed a deep loyalty to our ideals in those critical days. I used to watch her, tall and slim, with a lovely, sad face, but often standing with her hand across her back, as if she had some weakness there. It was the still sadness of her expression which worried me and made me wish I knew her well enough to try to find out what troubled her and to offer some consolation. It was not

until after her death that I learned from her friend, Lady Jowitt, the deep-seated cause of her melancholy—so deep-seated that she made no effort to live when illness overtook her.

There were three other women on our side in that Parliament. First Jennie Lee. Just as most of our women members were much older than I was, so Jennie was much younger. Too young perhaps, and too pretty; for a life which pushes one to the front of the stage needs a certain maturity before one is ready to take it. But she had a grand background, and a few electoral misfortunes brought to the front all the forces which had gone into her making, and have given us today the splendid politician and first-class minister which she has become.

To complete the tale, there was Miss Picton Turbeville-Jones, M.P. for the Wrekin—very ill-tempered, who seldom spoke to any of us—and Mrs Hamilton. I have to confess that I can remember very little about her, except that she wore long dangly ear-rings, smoked cigarettes with a long holder and had coloured heels to her shoes. I fancy she felt slightly above the rest of us, belonging to a somewhat superior crowd outside the House—an idea confirmed when I read a very name-dropping book by her. She hero-worshipped Ramsay MacDonald, sitting at his feet as a disciple before her guru.

I don't really remember how many women there were on the Tory benches, but there was only one who made any impact on me—the one and only Nancy Astor, and I defy anyone to have found her less than a fascinating conundrum. She was a warm-hearted, impulsive person, ready to be friends with anyone willing to accept her overtures—but most of our women were not. "A plum among a lot of old prunes, that's what you are," she once said to me when Susan had discomfited her. "What makes 'em so darned rude?"

I made one friend among the men on the Tory back benches. I must mention him because later, when I was responsible for the evacuation of children from Bilbao, I was deeply indebted to him for his great generosity. I had known Sir Paul Latham slightly when he was on the education committee of the L.C.C. He won a bye-election at Scarborough and was introduced into the House on the same day as I was. We had a common interest in education and particularly in Trevelyan's Bill to raise the school leaving age and so keep off the labour market a whole group of young workers.

II

It is natural that one should enjoy being a Member of Parliament. I certainly did, although it was at a time of deep anxiety and mounting crisis. No one had any prescription for solving the tragedy of unemployment; the figures went steadily up week by week, and were to top the 3,000,000 mark before the year was out. There were continual arguments about works schemes, the most hopeful of which was put forward by Tom Johnston, one of the more likeable, more level-headed Members at that time. But nothing materialised. We suffered a complete paralysis of will and the atmosphere of defeat hung over the place like a pall.

I was to hear only one Budget in that Parliament. In April, Snowden was recovering from a severe operation and although his Land Tax pleased everyone, particularly the Liberals whose baby it was, his promise of a small prospective budget surplus did nothing to dispel the gloom and foreboding since no one believed it. In the event it proved to be in flat contradiction to the Report of the May Committee, which three months later predicted a large budget deficit.

Snowden, whom we had regarded as 'sea-green incorruptible', now began to earn the distrust of some of his oldest friends. He clamoured for a cut in unemployment insurance. We were not sure if he had over-persuaded some of his Cabinet colleagues, and it was a great relief when Ramsay MacDonald and Arthur Henderson announced to a meeting of the Parliamentary Party that there would be no cuts in benefits; no increase in contributions and no change in the conditions of transitional benefit. Had there been any changes there would have been one hell of a row. This was something on which not only every member of the House was united, but every Labour supporter in the country. I have to be truthful and say that during the whole of that unhappy session, my affection and admiration for the Prime Minister remained undiminished.

I cannot write with the hind-sight of so many of my contemporaries, that they already detected his confusion and that his image was tarnished by vanity and conceit. I sometimes had Union engagements in the North of England and would travel with a crowd of our Durham miners. They tried to regale me with MacDonald's boasting of the great ladies who were in love with

him. I poured scorn on the idea. "All right hinney," they would retaliate. "You lassies are all the same, a handsome figure of a man; a voice to match and you're bowled over." But he and I had been friends for so many years. His outstanding courage during the war and his decision to go into the wilderness rather than forsake his principles had made me regard him as a king among men.

Just after my introduction into the House, an Economy Committee of outsiders had been set up, with Sir George May as Chairman; their brief was to make recommendations on possible economies which would reduce the prospective budget deficit. My Union distrusted the May Committee and looked forward with apprehension to its report. It came at the end of the session, on July 31, with a very thin House. I had only stayed behind because a clerk from my office was coming in during the afternoon to help me clear up my arrears of correspondence.

Someone rushed in from the Lobby and sitting down beside me gasped out, "The May Report's in the Vote Office—go and get your copy!" I dashed out of the Chamber, secured my copy and turned at once to 'Teachers' Salaries'. The recommendations were outrageous—a cut of 30 per cent and that decision only after much discussion since the committee had really felt a cut of 50 per cent would have been more appropriate.

I rang up Fred Mander, our General Secretary, and gave him the bare outlines, and was told to leave my correspondence, get back to the office at once, and bring my copy with me. There was an air of crisis in the office. Telegrams were being sent to all executive members calling emergency meetings for that evening and all day Saturday; hordes of clerks were despatched to join the queue outside the Stationery Office and secure as many copies of the May Report as possible; senior officials scoured the streets to buy up the evening papers.

I joined my Parliamentary colleague, W. G. Cove, M.P. for Wellingborough and later Aberavon, to discuss our strategy as Labour M.P.s. It might be necessary to concentrate on the cuts in teachers' salaries since they were the most catastrophic, but it was our job, on the one hand, to make it clear to the Executive that we should be fighting all the cuts—cuts in the social services, the police force, the fighting services, above all

cuts in the rates of benefit to the unemployed—and on the other, to make some explanation that the flight from the pound was not only the work of foreigners, but of our own traitors within the gate. This was alarming and an immediate effort had to be made to restore confidence.

This is all painfully familiar today and commonplace to intelligent people like teachers. That was not the case in 1930. Having lived, in the past, on the fat from our foreign investments, financial and economic crises were a new phenomenon. The General Secretary made it plain that he thought a special responsibility lay on my shoulders, as I was a member of the National Executive Committee of the Party. Our Union Executive were sympathetic to my own point of view. They were by no means 'left', but day by day they taught the children of the unemployed and knew at first-hand the misery those families were suffering.

The N.E.C. of the Party met in the middle of August, a joint meeting with the General Council of the T.U.C. Like all people who are worried and anxious, we were short-tempered, and there were some rancorous outbursts. Snowden gave some of the figures on which the Cabinet had agreed: a 20 per cent cut in the salaries of Ministers with salaries of £5,000 and more (rather a pleasant contrast to those M.P.s of today who are always holding out their begging bowls); 20 per cent cuts in the salaries of teachers; reduction in pay for the police, civil servants, and the fighting forces, and, whilst there would be no actual cut, the dole would only last for 26 weeks, since there would be no more borrowing for the unemployment fund. This suggestion aroused much anger. Where were the unemployed to go after their benefit had run out? To the poor law? Much more appealing to many of us was the suggestion of a 10 per cent revenue cut. I had never been a convinced Free Trader myself and was glad that people whom I respected, especially Willie Graham, saw this as a preferable alternative to a cut in the dole. Naturally I was very angry at the suggested 20 per cent cut in teachers' salaries, and protested vigorously against it. They were already grossly underpaid.

Anxiety increased as August wore on. What were members of the Cabinet deciding? Who would stand firm and resign, rather than accept cuts in unemployment benefit? The ordinary back-bencher had nothing to go on but rumour and newspaper

speculation—only cheered up by the Invergordon incident,* although that caused panic and alarm in the hearts of those who recalled that the Russian Revolution had started in their navy.

I knew a great deal more than most people, although I was sworn to secrecy about all I was told. Since my election, I had lived with the Stevensons during the week, only going to Cambridge during week-ends. Willie Stevenson, Editor of the *Daily Herald*, never arrived home before midnight, tired and depressed. I was very tired and depressed myself. Following our usual routine, I was in charge of our Union office while the rest of my colleagues took their annual leave. Just then this suited me very well. I spent every evening in my constituency or speaking for other M.P.s in London or the extra-metropolitan area. I generally arrived on the doorstep of our house in Highbury at the same time as Steve. He always wanted to talk. He had been a good friend to me and together with Arthur Greenwood and Scott Lindsay, Secretary to the Parliamentary Party, we had enjoyed many a long talk in the Lords' Bar. So if Steve wanted to talk, I had to settle down to listen—to what Laval had told him, to what the Americans were forcing on us—until the small hours. Always he had on the table a bottle of whisky and a pint of milk. The more he drank, the more clear-headed he became, until quite suddenly he would fall asleep and I could creep quietly up to bed.

Not unnaturally he was at odds with the Cabinet. He was blamed for inaccurate and sensational reports and when the truth came out and we knew who had voted for the dole cuts and who had stood firm, he published the names too. In the last week in August, he told me, tears coursing down his cheeks, that we had accepted the humiliating terms forced upon us by America: a 10 per cent cut in the dole. He said that the Cabinet had resigned and that MacDonald was to head a National Government. I was so stunned and bewildered that for the moment I didn't really understand what had happened. "But he can't take the Cabinet and the Parliamentary Party with him, can he?" I asked.

"No, of course not," Steve replied. "We shall go into opposition, but a few bastards will follow him—Snowden, Thomas, Sankey will stick to their jobs. There is some talk that Morrison is undecided and has been invited to continue in his job as

* The meeting of naval ratings that took place in September 1931.



EUZKADI'KO JAURLARITZA
ERI - ZAINITZA

GOBIERNO DE EUZKADI
GOBERNACIÓN



Firma del interesado,

Leah Manning

Permission to carry
arms, Bilbao, 1937

Mrs. Leah Manning
Ex Miembro Parlamentario del
Partido Laborista Británico

Euzkadi'ko lurralde osuan
ibilteko baimena, biar dau-
zan izkilubak erabili al-
ixateko ezkubidia dauko,
bere eginbiak alantxe es-
katuten daulako.

Neure menpeko agin
tarijak, edo zelariak, eri-
gional eta gudarijak nai
ta nai ez gauza gustijetan
lagundu biar dautsoe eta
biar daben etestasuna
emon begijoe.

Queda autorizada para
circular libremente dentro
del territorio de Euzkadi,
usar aquellas armas que
crea necesarias, teniendo
un mandato tan amplio
como su cargo lo requiere.

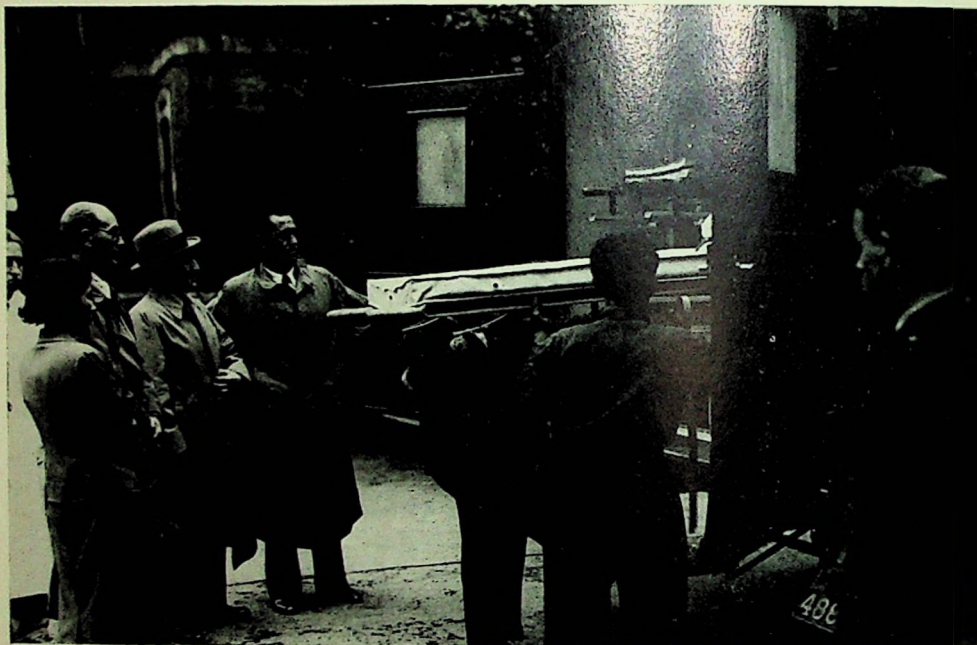
Las autoridades a mis ór-
denes, sean cuales fueren,
ciudadanos y milicias, tie-
nen obligación de prestarle
toda clase de atenciones y
facilidades en el cumpli-
miento de su misión.

Bilbao 18 de Mayo de 1937



El Consejero
de Gobernación.

El Secretario General
[Signature]



The Basque President receives an ambulance, Bilbao, May 1937

Waiting for embarkation on the *Habana*, Bilbao, May 1937



Minister of Transport." I realised that Morrison was wedded to his job and was in the middle of a big undertaking to re-organise London Transport. But much as I disliked Morrison, I could not credit this, and it turned out to be one of those *canards* often put about when a man is unpopular with certain sections.

"Don't repeat this to anyone in your office," Steve warned me. Above all he was a good pressman. If there was hot news it would be served up first in the *Herald*.

A few days later, I received a summons to attend a meeting of the Parliamentary Party at Transport House. Although, by this time, rumours were rife, some people seemed not to have grasped the seriousness of the situation nor to know what had hit them. Others, like me, who had some clues were unhappy and apprehensive. This was a watershed in the history of our Party. Our Socialist world would never be quite the same again and although we may seem to have risen from the dead, I don't think it ever has been—the trauma was too deep.

The only one of the renegades who had the courage to attend the meeting was Lord Sankey, whom we all respected for his work as Chairman of the Sankey Commission on the Nationalisation of Coal. I must suppose that it had not been easy for him to put his head into the lion's mouth, but he made a moving speech. His reason, or excuse, whichever one may call it, seemed to justify his action. The Second India Round Table Conference was imminent and as chairman of the Structure Committee he felt it was a task he could not leave unfinished.

Mr Clynes moved that Arthur Henderson become Leader of the Party. This was surely an act of self-abnegation of which few politicians would have been capable. He had been defeated for the leadership by MacDonald in 1922 and might have felt he had some right to the succession. Moreover Uncle Arthur was already General Secretary and Treasurer, but on reflection he seemed the only possible choice.

When the vote was taken, the little dissident group of I.L.P.-ers were the only ones to vote against. James Barr who was in the Chair gave an account of the work of the Consultative Committee which had been meeting throughout the crisis and had decided we should go into Opposition and that our manifesto should repudiate the National Government and all that it stood for. The only spot of light in the pervading gloom was that the

Parliamentary Party was intact, with the exception of Malcolm MacDonald, who felt, not unnaturally, that he must follow his father. We were more united than we had been for many months.

On the last Monday in August, the new Coalition National Government faced us. We were the Opposition, a troubled, unhappy Opposition, in spite of the fact that some boasted they had a sense of liberation they had not known for months. Hugh Dalton was one, but I suspected it was mostly a case of whistling in the dark, to keep up one's spirits. We knew that we were to face, after the Scarborough Conference, a coupon election, for in every constituency anti-labour pacts were being hurriedly manoeuvred.

Except for the fight I put up for education and teachers' salaries, there are only two things I can clearly remember from those few weeks—my astonishment at hearing McClean, a leading Liberal statesman, making a fervent speech in support of a return to protection and the bitter taunt of Philip Snowden when he told the Opposition, "The place that knows them, will know them no more."

III

I began my campaign in East Islington as soon as the unexciting Scarborough Conference was over. The only opposing candidate was Thelma Cazalet whom I had defeated in the bye-election. At first things seemed to be going pretty well. My bills were in all the windows where we usually claimed support; my meetings were packed and Will, enraged at the Liberal desertion from Free Trade, brought his car from Cambridge and rushed me about all over London, so that we could arrange exchanges with other colleagues and keep our platforms lively. I had an excellent agent and the canvass was favourable.

But in the last few days I began to feel a cold draught. "Steve," I said, "my bills are suddenly disappearing from all the windows and Thelma Cazalet's are going up instead." But I still couldn't feel where the draught was blowing from, or understand what to do to counteract it. Then, suddenly at one of my meetings a girl thrust her post office savings book in my face, and yelled that I had stolen all the money she had saved

for her wedding. A Tory stunt was beginning to pay off: MacDonald with his million mark notes; Runciman with his lying 'Post Office Savings Scare': "All your savings have been lent to the unemployment fund"; "Our savings in danger, our savings in danger". Wherever we went this sinister warning worked on an over-wrought electorate as a spell.

The count for the four seats in the Borough was to take place the following morning, so after the poll closed we all went along to the Labour Club. As we sat in the bar and the monotonous toll of labour defeats came over the air, the lively talkative crowd that had sat there every evening during the campaign listened in stunned silence, disbelieving what they heard. "Conservative gain from Labour" came through with mortifying regularity: names famous in the Party, members of the Government, close friends were all affected. The Stevensons tried to cheer me up. "It won't happen to you," said Steve. I felt utterly dejected and when the Bristol East result came through, "Cripps in, by 571 votes", I ought to have got up and shouted "Cheers, a Labour victory at last." Well I didn't! I heard the result in bitter silence. Glances of sympathy showed that my friends shared my feelings, for the story was well-known in the constituency.

We were all out, North, South, East and West, and my colleague, Fred Montague, a randy old fellow, was later translated to the Lords.

At the next meeting of the constituency party I was re-adopted; at the same time the N.U.T. invited me to take up the post of Assistant Education Officer, which had just fallen vacant. I was delighted at both prospects. I could get home to Cambridge every evening and at week-ends. Naturally disappointed at my defeat, I still felt my course was set fair. I was young and I thought that since I had won East Islington against such long odds, I had every chance of recapturing it with careful nursing when the electoral tide turned in our favour. But political success has always had an uncanny way of eluding me and things didn't turn out as I expected. There were to be many unforeseen changes which ruined my chances of ever again becoming the well-lined Union candidate, for whom the safe seats have a magnetic quality. Until this time, my Union had had a very extravagant Parliamentary policy. When a supported candidate lost his seat, he was instructed to get himself re-adopted at once, or find another more favourable constituency. Until the next

General Election liberal nursing expenses were paid, and at the election all election expenses met.

Now, by a Conference resolution, all was changed. The parliamentary panel was reduced from nine to three, one in each Party, and no special place for a woman. There were to be no nursing expenses and only a very small subsidy towards the cost of the election, if re-elected to the Union's panel as an 'assisted candidate'. I am not here trying to defend the cash nexus, only explain it. Although I was personally involved, I had always disapproved of the Union policy, since we were constantly putting up candidates who hadn't the faintest chance of success, just because they happened to be members of the executive. What really annoyed me was that it became a way of helping the Tory Party: the Liberal panel never had more than one member; the Labour panel none for years, until Goldstone captured Sunderland.

East Islington was a very expensive constituency to nurse. While I was an M.P. I had been very happy to pay the agent's salary and make a quarterly contribution to Party funds as well. Now I had no income but my union salary, which in those days was not overwhelming. Having lost my seat, I had no nursing expenses from the Union, and had to wait until the next general election was in sight before getting back on the panel. I was not anxious on that score, but almost my entire salary was draining away into East Islington. Had I not been living at home, I should have thrown in my hand before I did. I struggled on for nearly two years, then resigned my prospective candidature. It was suggested that I should hang on for Islington South, which was a very good seat where the candidate was near retiring age; but it was a printers' union seat and I had no wish to fall out with any union. I had always allied myself with the T.U. group in the House and hoped to do so again.

IV

At the Leicester Conference, I lost my seat on the N.E.C. of the Party. It was one of those silly things, which I brought on myself by my lack of perspicacity. During the year I had been a member of the sub-committee studying the banking system. The resolution which we prepared for conference proposed to exclude from nationalisation the joint stock banks, and also that

we should continue during the coming year our study of the short term credit system. Hugh Dalton was our chairman and it was agreed that he should move the resolution on behalf of the executive and that I should second it formally. A similar directive was given to Susan Lawrence for the committee of which she was a member. I did as I was told. To my dismay, Susan went on and seconded her resolution in a sound speech.

I had a few words with her. Her reply was tart and to the point, "Why were you such a fool?" she scolded me. "You're old enough to know by now that these men want to hog all the limelight for themselves. Don't ever bother to argue with them; just go ahead and do as you want." I learned a lesson.

But as it turned out it was a serious mistake on my part: I had not anticipated what might flow from it. Our resolution was the most bitterly fought of the conference, with Frank Wise and Stafford Cripps and their newly-formed Socialist League marshalling opposition to the executive by an amendment which they succeeded in carrying. I was accused not unnaturally of lacking the courage to stand up to my brief. I was even accused, since I was known to be left-wing, of being in league with the rebels. I lost the miners' vote, but not I think any others. That was a heavy vote and just enough to put me out. Before conference was over, many people regretted what had happened, especially after I had moved the executive resolution on education. Clynes, who seconded me, went out of his way to say, "Having heard Leah, you will now realise what a valuable member of the executive you have lost."

T. R. Williams, of the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society, who held the one seat reserved for socialist and co-operative societies, offered to stand down from that section if I could get the nomination of the National Association of Labour Teachers, which would have been easy since I was both its founder and its chairman. Hugh Dalton promised to canvass the votes of the unions for me. He always felt remorseful for having forced my hand over Bristol East. In a letter to me, shortly before his death, he wrote :

How differently things would have turned out for you, if I'd let you fight your own battle with Uncle Arthur, over Bristol East.

Once more I felt fairly confident. I should regain my seat on the executive and, with the prestige executive members always command at Transport House, ask for suggestions about a London seat that did not want all expenses paid.

But I was not in command of events. The work in my Department at Hamilton House had increased to such an extent that the General Secretary persuaded the Union Executive that I hadn't the time to serve on the N.E.C. of the Labour Party—at least that is what he said, for although N.E.C. work was time-consuming, his real reasons were quite other. Consequently when I went to Transport House to ask for advice about a constituency, I had no Queen of Hearts to play; no executive seat and no money. The National Agent came up with a quite unexpected suggestion. The death of Marion Phillips, Chief Woman Officer of the Party, had left a vacancy for a prospective candidate in the double-member constituency of Sunderland. "D. N. Pritt has already been adopted," said the agent, "but he has little experience—he's an eminent lawyer, not a politician, the executive thought you were the most likely woman in the field to succeed Marion and hold his hand. It's an absolutely safe seat," he concluded affably, "and we want you back in the House."

He was so pleasant about it all that I had not the courage even to say that I would think it over. But I felt very foolish. I had just turned down Darlington saying that it was too far from London, and Sunderland was farther still. The approach had been made through the Local Association of the N.U.T. on the grounds that the great danger in Darlington was not Macmillan, their Member, but his wife, Lady Dorothy. She had great charm and they wanted someone with equal charm to counterbalance it. I know I have many political assets, but charm is certainly not one of them. Moreover I had a real disinclination to fight Macmillan. In a way he reminded me of my hero Disraeli. I greatly admired some of the speeches he was making at that time, and his attitude towards unemployment. If we must have Tories in the House, I thought, let us have a few Macmillans. Some of the old admiration still lingered on when I was back in the House, and there were times when, later, I certainly preferred him to our new leader Gaitskell.

Under pressure from the National Agent, I opted for Sunder-

land and was unanimously adopted by their General Management Committee. How I wish I had won that seat. I loved the people. Geordies really are the salt of the earth and the constituency party was copper-bottomed. I put some hard slogging into Sunderland. At week-ends, I would leave the office near King's Cross at five o'clock on Friday afternoons and head for the Great North Road. Driving through the night I arrived in Sunderland during the small hours of the morning. I usually spent Saturday forenoon meeting party officials and trade union leaders. In the afternoon if there was no party meeting, and Sunderland was playing at home, I went to Roker Park. In those days I was a soccer fan. At Highbury, when I was M.P. for East Islington, I could always have a seat in the Directors' box with lavish drinks and refreshments. At Roker Park I stood on the terraces. It was a good way of making friends with the supporters. Saturday evenings there was a dance or a social; Sunday morning I would meet constituents; Sunday afternoon attend a 'Brotherhood' or other religious meeting; and Sunday evening, if we ran a public meeting in the 'Flat-iron' building, I would drive through the night back to London. I suppose I did this at least once a month—the other week-ends were taken up with Union business. Whilst I often felt physically exhausted after a Sunderland jaunt, I always felt mightily refreshed in spirit. Right up to the date when the 1935 General Election was announced, Johnny Pritt and I felt quite confident.

Then the blow fell.

Most double member constituencies were represented by two National Conservatives. Sunderland was one such. The Tory Central Office got to work, and somehow or other persuaded one of the Tories to stand down and allow his place to be taken by a National Liberal. In this case he was later given a knighthood. We had no actual pact with the Sunderland Liberals, but they had always worked with us in so far as Borough elections were concerned, as if a pact actually existed. In this way we had kept a very substantial anti-Tory majority on the Council. It had been tacitly understood that we should have their support against the National Tory combination when the General Election took place. But not now.

Furness, Withy, the ship-builders, were prepared to put a ship on the stocks if young Stephen Furness was adopted as the National Liberal candidate to run in double harness with the

National Conservative. It was an irresistible argument. The desperate plight of the shipyards: the poverty and distress of those proud men who in times of prosperity had worked in them, had often wrung my heart. To visit these men in their homes, where often a pot of jam and a loaf of bread made their main meal of the day, sent me away cursing the National Government and their bloody-mindedness over every aspect of unemployment insurance.

Johnny Pritt made tracks for London and found himself a safe seat, but I hadn't the courage to desert a Party that had given us so much friendship and worked so hard for us. Transport House sent Professor Catlin, husband of Vera Brittain and father of Shirley Williams, to take his place. I could not have had a more friendly running partner. He was a man of great charm and integrity, but he was new to the constituency, and in the North one needs a little time to run oneself in. Vera came up to help us and made a terrific hit at our public meetings. The campaign went well, right up to polling day—indeed I rang Will to say I thought we were pretty safe.

But about eleven o'clock on polling day, I was shown a leaflet which had been delivered before the polling booths were opened; not to everyone, only to the homes of the very large Catholic population. When I read that pamphlet, I knew I should lose, and that at such a late moment there was nothing I could do about it. At the time Ethel Mannin, the distinguished novelist, was writing about love and sex in a manner which today would be regarded as responsible and commonplace. In 1935 such views were not so regarded. A rather outspoken passage had been extracted away from its context and underneath the quotation, the words:

Do you want a woman who holds such views to represent you at Westminster.

I knew at once that the whole Catholic vote would desert me.

What I found particularly wounding was that I had counted on the Catholic vote. Over the years I had supported aid for Catholic school buildings. My views were well-known; I had stuck to them throughout the conferences on the religious settlement and been thanked for my stand by the Catholic Bishops. I have never been able to decide whether it was a genuine

mistake in which the Catholics were not involved, or whether it was a trick engineered by the Tories. But I do know that quite a number of people used to call me Ethel. I didn't think much of it at the time—I was so used to being called Ethel in East Islington after dear old Dr Ethel—and it was not until I was back in the House and the Durham miners continued to call me Ethel that the penny dropped and I had to confess, with great humility, that I was not the famous novelist.

As Sunderland was a double member constituency, Professor Catlin and I both went down together. I suppose most candidates for Parliament would say that the choice of a constituency is either a matter of luck or judgment. I never had either, only a rather stupid loyalty to the wishes of Transport House, for when I got back in 1945 it was due to a random shot in the dark, which I never expected would pay off. After Sunderland I came to the conclusion that I had not got what it takes to make a successful candidate. I was not tough enough perhaps; or I had not sufficient drive or ambition: I loathed canvassing for myself and was never any good at it. To be a political animal is so very different from being a successful politician. Although Sunderland wanted to re-adopt me, and I was approached by several other constituencies asking if I was interested, I wrote to Transport House requesting them to take my name off the list and to say I was no longer available.

I returned happily to my work in the Education Department at Hamilton House. My chief, an elderly man and not in the best of health, preferred the office side of our work. The General Secretary, Sir Frederick Mander, who had a rooted dislike of non-complaisant women, told my chief, "I don't want Leah under my feet in the office. Let her do the meetings and the case work with the Authorities." Nothing could have pleased me better. Every weekend I could address Local and County Associations in every part of the country; I was free to make my own arrangements to discuss education schemes, as they affected teachers, with education officials and members of L.E.A.s; I could visit schools of all types, and still have a couple of days in the middle of the week to go to Cambridge—always a joy.

There was another advantage which I didn't advertise. When I was going to a fairly remote area, I always wrote to the Labour Agent, saying I would be free to address a weekend

meeting, if I could fit it in with my Union engagements—without fee or travelling expenses, this offer was most gratefully accepted over and over again!

By now we were in the mid-thirties. One phase of my life had ended. Soon I was to have many other things to think about.

IX

The Thirties

I

FRUSTRATING, HATE-FILLED, though they were, the thirties were undeniably exhilarating. At home the situation was hopelessly depressing; in the international field, a cloud, at first no bigger than a man's hand, was looming in the sky. During the next seven fateful years it was to grow, evil and horrific, until it filled the whole horizon, burst upon a still incredulous world and engulfed us all. We did nothing to prevent it, we systematically destroyed our only defence against it—the League of Nations.

During those years, on the way to total catastrophe, it was not surprising that many younger people looked to the Soviet Union as the hope of the world. Our own democratic institutions had shown such utter ineptitude in dealing with the crises of capitalism through which we had passed since the end of the war that we began to wonder if Russia might not have found the solution. I had been fortunate, during those early days after the revolution, in visiting Russia with a deputation of teachers. We only saw the surface of things, and much of that was chaotic, but we felt in our hearts the exhilarating tides of hope and enthusiasm.

When teachers showed us the early efforts of pupils who had never expected any kind of schooling, we knew their sense of wonder that such a thing could happen in their time. True the children were poorly clad and not very well fed. Revolution and wars of intervention had seen to that. But our own children at home, the families of 3,000,000 workers without jobs, were starving and the means test was vicious. Our colleagues in Britain had no sense of wonder, only bitter anger that the young they taught had been so betrayed.

Some felt so strongly that they joined the Communist Party; many more joined broad-based institutions, in which they were

happy to work with communists. I did myself. I had, so I supposed, cut my painter as a parliamentary candidate; and I foresaw that my work in Germany would soon be coming to an end. I had managed to bring out my special friends, Harry Grottewitz and his wife, but I still continued my work with the Committee for the Relief of the Victims of Fascism, speaking at money-raising meetings, and standing as a guarantor for refugees from Austria and Germany, especially colleagues in my own profession.

Among these was a young author, who had escaped over the passes into Switzerland. He had written part of his novel *The Street*, about the sufferings of those who lived in the great block of flats in 'Red Berlin' where his own home was. He could not bear to leave his uncompleted script behind, so he bought one of those enormously long loaves, scooped out the soft centre, and concealed the script in the crusty outside. Isabel Brown, the well-known communist leader, begged me to give him some assistance. So for many months he lived in our cottage in Hatfield Broad Oak, until he had finished his book and then found work in the North of England.

To all of us who recognised the dangers ahead, there had to be a division into Bolsheviks and Fascists. Of course this was an over-simplification, but it gave us a focus for our work—we were known as Crypto-Communists. From Transport House there issued forth a stream of hortatory circulars, forbidding association with, or signing petitions organised by, or speaking on the same platform with, any 'Front' organisation.

I had been playing a significant part in such an organisation myself, since I had accepted an invitation to become Joint Secretary with John Strachey of the Co-ordinating Committee against War and Fascism. I had already met Strachey in the Left Book Club, one of the few institutions which at that time seemed to offer inspiration and comradeship. I was delighted to work with him, although it put me on the spot for the moment. The head and front of all the blether that issued from Transport House was Herbert Morrison and he made it his business to visit my General Secretary and warn him that I was a member of the communist party.

Poor Fred Mander. He was one of those who imagined a communist under every bed. After a communist president (C. T. Giles) and two party members on his executive, he began to

take fright. He issued a Private and Confidential document to every official and executive member: *Communism at Work in the Union*. Now he had been warned that he had a viper in his very bosom. He hastened to pay a visit to King Street and to ask Harry Pollitt if I was indeed a member of his party. What an incredible piece of naïveté. Pollitt's answer was illuminating: "We like and admire Leah Manning very much. She's done splendid work in Germany, but this is a disciplined movement—and Leah! Well she's a complete individualist!" An answer which was retailed to me with much delight by one of our executive members, together with Mander's sympathetic response to it, since it completely coincided with his own opinion of me. After that he considered Harry Pollitt a man of great perception.

II

It was under the auspices of the World Committee that in 1934 I undertook the visit to Spain which I have described in my book *What I Saw in Spain*. In his introduction to this book, Johnny Pritt points out with great clarity the sameness of the political problems confronting all Western Europe at that time. Although I found that the rising in Asturias had been put down by the most bloody and brutal repression, my instinct told me that this was not the end, rather the prelude to more terrifying events in Spain. I closed my book with some memories taken from Rose's *Life of Napoleon*, which gives a vivid picture of the reactions of a proud, passionate, intransigent race, when it feels itself insulted or unjustly used, and added:

There is today a more virulent ulcer in Spain than that of which the dying Napoleon so tragically spoke, 'It was the Spanish ulcer which ruined me.' It is the ulcer of social injustice, of economic disorder and of spiritual oppression.

But like elephants, Spaniards never forget, and there lie hidden in the coal and steel towns of the main valley of the Valgrandi River ten thousand rifles oiled and buried against the day.

My instinct was to prove tragically right. But I did not know how deeply I was to be involved in 'the day' when at last it came.

III

I should not have been surprised, when I returned from Spain, if my General Secretary had raised again my affiliations with 'Front' organisations. He probably felt he could leave such disciplining as I needed to Herbert Morrison; so as far as the N.U.T. was concerned, I was allowed to go on my individualist way undisturbed. If we were cryptos, there were some among us who would later reach both the back and the front benches of Parliament, notably my co-secretary John Strachey. And we were fighting those who were in no sense cryptos, but completely fascist, in the Mosley-led New Party. I often went to their open-air meetings at the corner of Ridley Road with my Jewish friends, George and Santo Jeger. We asked polite questions, seeking information. It was very difficult to get answers from such people; indeed we were once involved in a punch-up with the future Lord Haw-Haw, and whenever I heard his hateful voice during the war, I could think with pleasure, "Well I once had the satisfaction of smacking his face."

But these were diversions. The situation in the country became more desperate as every week passed. The unemployed with their hungry, despairing families were a blot on the nation. If in these more affluent days we cannot bear to hear the words 'means test' used in any context whatsoever it is because those words have left a scar on our minds. In the thirties we suffered a traumatic experience from which we have found it hard to recover. Before a man could receive his benefit, the earnings of his whole family had to be taken into account and the Tory Party, which had so often prated about the sanctity of family life, destroyed thousands of families by driving from home, boys and girls who could not bear to see their father's benefit cut by the few shillings a week that they could earn.

Whilst Wally Hannington's Hunger-marchers tramped from Durham, Lancashire and the Midlands, and gallant little Ellen led her thousands from Jarrow, 'The Town that was Murdered', we listened to one inspired voice from the Commons: Nye Bevan speaking for those who could not speak for themselves. I had scarcely known Nye during the short period I had represented East Islington, indeed I had been disappointed when he had seemed to fall under the spell of Mosley. Now among that

tiny remnant returned after the debacle of 1931, he had become an heroic figure, vehement, passionate.

Eagerly I would scan every issue of *Tribune* to read his searing attacks during the unemployment debates. When the Government introduced a measure to force the long-term unemployed—men who could not find work, because there was no work to be found—under the care of a new body, 'The Unemployment Assistance Board', Nye described it as "the crowning infamy. . . a measure to take poverty out of politics and make the poor dumb, and the only way for a man to protest will be to throw a brick through a window."

A small incident which has always stuck in my mind concerning the hated means test occurred during a visit to the home of an unemployed friend in my old constituency of East Islington. They were at their mid-day meal—the usual loaf of bread and pot of jam. "Careful, Johnny," said the mother, "it's got to last all week." "Crikey," the boy answered, "I'm the only one earning in this family, ain't I? I've got a right to the 'ole pot if I want it." I looked at the father. He said not a word but, white to the lips, got up from the table and left the house. Well might Nye say that the means test was an acid, eating into the homes of the poor, that in their small rooms and around their meagre tables, hells of personal acrimony and wounded vanities were arising.

But my own thoughts were more and more distracted by the growing fascist cloud. As the thirties moved inexorably on, so did the cloud and it was to burst first of all in Spain, where, I remembered, in the steel towns and along the valley of the Valgrandi River, ten thousand rifles lay oiled and buried against 'the day'.

X

Spain

I WAS IN the Soviet Union in 1937, with Johnny Pritt, when the storm broke. Ellen was there with a delegation from her union. I rushed round to her hotel to ask her if she would fly back to London with me the next day if I could make the arrangements: I had already seen Intourist about them. Although such a precipitate flight from Russia would have been out of the question in normal times, all their sympathies were aroused by the circumstances. I would have to spend the night in Prague and change planes there.

Ellen, always impetuous, had already set out by boat, which meant I would be in England many days ahead of her. Johnny did not think either of us would get permission to enter Spain. I thought Ellen might have difficulty—she and Listowel had encountered trouble there in 1934. But I had many warm Spanish friends and did not doubt I would get the necessary visa and safe conduct. No one could give me better advice than Rosa and Vicente Barragan. I rang their flat at 7.30 the next morning, before Vicente could set off for his university classes.

Their bubbling excitement nearly choked the wires. "Darling, you will really go; come at once; but at once; of course, everything, yes, everything. We shall ring Don Pablo at once and make an appointment for you this afternoon. Nothing, but nothing shall stand in the way; come here for lunch at 12.30, yes 12.30."

Don Pablo de Azcarate was the Spanish Ambassador and I already knew him quite well, and was to know him much better during the war years. His grave courtesy never faltered during all those sad days, until he was replaced after the fascist victory. His plans were ready when I arrived at the Embassy. He had been in touch with Luis d'Araquistán, Spanish Ambassador in Paris. My plane to Paris was booked for the next day, and I

was to stay at the Embassy until all the arrangements were complete. How charming! how generous all these people were! I was no V.I.P., no longer even a Member of Parliament. But as all history shows, Spaniards never forget. My investigations into the unprecedented ferocity of the repression in Asturias, following the revolt of 1934, achieved for me a warm welcome wherever I went. I stayed with the Araquistans several days whilst my safe-conduct was being prepared. I think it is a unique document, for it was signed by all five sections of the United Front and I have never met or heard of anyone else with such a valuable document.

I left Paris for Irun on November 3, flying from there to Alicante, where I was to spend the night before going on to Madrid. And what a night it was! The town was in utter darkness, my first experience of total black-out, for it was being constantly shelled from the sea. I went with the aviators to a small sea-front hotel. Putting into my hand a large glass of sherry and a plate of sandwiches, the hotelier propelled me by the aid of a tiny glimmer of torchlight to my bedroom. He refused to leave the torch with me but kept repeating, in stern tones, "Four o'clock in the morning; the señora must present herself at four o'clock in the morning, in the dining room. The aviators will not wait." I asked him meekly if he would kindly call me at 3.30, then, as he departed, I sat on the side of my bed and ate my supper. Weariness and the unaccustomed amount of sherry must have dulled my senses. I should have carefully folded my clothes and placed them on the chair beside my bed. Instead I kicked off my shoes and let my clothes fall to the ground where I stood. Instantly I was asleep and it seemed only a few minutes later that I heard a banging on my door—"Time to get up, señora!"

I sprang out of bed. But which side of the bed? I was completely disorientated. Groping about in the deep blackness I found one garment after another. Twice came the banging on the door and I still had found only one shoe. "The aviators are just going. They must leave without you."

"No, please," I implored. "I'm just coming," and, hopping to the door, stumbled over my last shoe. Carrying it in my hand, my teeth chattering with fear, I hobbled down the stairs out into the starlit night and felt a friendly hand push me into the waiting car. The shelling had just started again. To my

intense relief, I found the friendly hand belonged to a fellow passenger, an English photographer, complete with a huge packet of sandwiches and a flask of boiling hot coffee. "For both of us," he explained, "when we get on the plane. I got up too late for any breakfast, and thought we'd have to leave you behind. What happened for God's sake?" He was fat and jolly, and the tears rolled down his cheeks as I told him of my frantic search for undies. "Well I knew where I'd laid my pants," he chuckled. Then I saw his shoes were tied by their laces round his neck. We were two of a kind.

He looked at me thoughtfully.

"What possessed you to come to Madrid, now?" he asked.

"Same reason as you, I suppose, to find out what goes on and see if there is anything I can do to help," I replied.

"But I'm a photographer, working for a newspaper. I've been in Madrid since this affair began, only popped over to Alicante for some new equipment. My paper thought it safer than sending it to Madrid; never know what's going to happen there."

For the first time I felt a slight tremor of alarm, but I said nothing. It was a very uncomfortable journey, hedge-hopping most of the way, to avoid Franco planes, and arriving much too late, at Getafe Airport, to pick up the car which my companion had ordered to take him into town. But that was our luck. Had we been on time, we should have been caught in the bombing. The airport was a shambles.

"It's a hell of a long way to the Florida and I've got all this bloody equipment to cart along," my companion complained lugubriously. "What do we do mate?" Well there was only one thing we could do—walk, and I could only return his kindness by offering to carry some of his lighter junk. On that journey I realised we had not been getting valid reports in England of the situation in Madrid. The streets were crowded with excited people, shaking their fists at the sky and above all a voice on the air which I recognised immediately, from many a platform in Europe, exhorting, encouraging—the voice of *La Pasionaria*.

Arrived at the Florida, my friend went off to see if it was possible to get any lunch. I sat in the lounge, listening to an excited hum of voices—French, Spanish, Russian, I could distinguish, and some of the faces seemed vaguely familiar; some gave me a half smile of puzzled recognition. Of course they were the foreign correspondents one meets at all kinds of in-

ternational conferences. I guessed later that what puzzled them was why I should be arriving, just as they were on the point of departing.

I longed for just one English voice, to explain that I must see del Vayo, urgently. Suddenly I was startled by a loud exclamation from someone coming down the stairs. He bounded across the lounge to me. "Leah Manning, what the hell are you doing here?" he exclaimed.

I was mildly surprised at his tone and answered as equably as I could. "Well you know my deep interest in Spain. I have a letter from Araquistán for del Vayo and I mean to see him, in the morning, to find out how best we can help, with foodships, medical supplies, arms if possible; then I shall go back to England, arrange meetings, raise funds, set up committees, send out delegations if possible. No one in England knows what the position really is. Despatches are confusing and unreliable."

"Well if you want to see del Vayo you'll have to be P.D.Q. I doubt if he'll be here in the morning. Madrid's about to fall and it's my guess Largo Caballero's government won't stay to see that happen." I was horrified.

"Leave Madrid and let Franco walk in?"

"Well Franco won't walk in. No walk-over, that's for sure. There's the bloodiest resistance going on over in University City."

I began to feel a little confused and frightened. Perhaps I'd bitten off more than I could chew, but I wasn't going to let this English journalist see my reaction to his news. However my photographer arrived just then, to say he had arranged lunch, and saved the situation. He agreed I should see del Vayo that afternoon as I had a letter from Paris.

"How's your Spanish?" he asked.

"Minimal," I confessed, although I'd been taking lessons with Vicente Barragán for about a year, but I didn't fancy trying it out with the excited crowd we'd encountered on our way from the airport.

"Right-o!" he laughed. "You let me have a snap of the intrepid Englishwoman in the doomed city and I'll come along with you and try to wrinkle out del Vayo for you."

He had been good fun: he did what he promised, but in all the years I was in and out of Spain I never saw him again, and never knew his name. I have often thought that those

two busy newspaper-men must have been very irritated at having to waste their time on an irresponsible woman who seemed to have come on a fruitless, perhaps foolish errand.

Del Vayo appeared to think otherwise. He came out to see me at once; he read Araquistan's letter then said: "It's just what we want; someone we know and can trust, who will get back to England and tell the Government what is happening here. Leah, this is something you can and must do. Explain the situation to all your old friends in Parliament. Get them to send out a delegation; tell them we must have transport, medical supplies, arms."

I began to wonder how on earth I was ever going to leave Madrid, let alone get back to England. But before I could express my doubts he went on, "All foreigners must leave Madrid in the morning. I've arranged transport and you'll proceed to Valencia." I didn't ask: del Vayo didn't need to say: the rumours were true.

As I went back through the streets, the bombs were falling again and the sound of gunfire, from University City, filled my ears. The streets were thronged; people, unafraid, shook their fists at the raiding planes, shrieking 'No Pasaran!' It didn't strike me, until long after, how different was this defiance from what I was to see in Valencia and Bilbao—there the crowds sat patiently for hours on end at the entrances to the *refugios*. But in Barcelona as soon as the sirens went—out they were on the streets, only intent in screaming hatred and loathing. One of the strangest things about the people of Spain is the great differences one finds in temperament and behaviour in different parts of the country.

When I got back to the Florida the lounge was deserted. All the journalists were out getting their stories. How much of it would get back to England unvarnished? Presently I heard that two old friends had been asking for me at the desk. Would I contact them at the Gran Via. I stayed there until three in the morning, helping them to destroy papers and pack what they were taking with them. "We've got our own transport, can we give you a lift to Valencia?" they asked. I told them I might have been more than grateful, but that Del Vayo had made all arrangements for the morning. I sank wearily into bed, but how carefully I placed all my garments on the chair by my side: shoes and stockings, dress, slip, girdle, pants, in that

order. I had learned my lesson and it served me well through many a bomb-drenched night in London, some years later.

We set out at dawn. William Forrest, the foreign correspondent of the *News Chronicle*, was in the same car as myself. He seemed to have become separated from his boots, and they were dangling from the back of the car in front of us. Whenever a plane went over, our crazy driver nearly had us in the ditch. Then something quite unexpected happened. The car in front of us suddenly disappeared down a side turning. It was not the route we had been given, so we went straight on towards Tarancón. Presently we were stopped by a road block, not very surprising, until we were ordered out of our car and marched under escort to the block house. Forrest, in fluent but somewhat picturesque Spanish, demanded to know what it was all about. It was soon made plain to us. These were Anarchists, demanding that we go back to Madrid. They were furious at what they regarded as the desertion, at a moment of supreme peril, of the capital and seat of government.

The previous evening they had stopped the Government cars and, at gun-point, had extracted a promise that all members would return to Madrid at once. Del Vayo, who probably knew the country a lot better than the members of F.A.I. who were from Barcelona, pretended to agree; they turned back towards Madrid then took the side turning that by-passed Tarancón. The driver of the first car in our contingent had been warned; we had not, and found ourselves in a most uncomfortable position. We suffered no particular hardship, only the disagreeable knowledge that, as soon as transport was available, we would be sent back to Madrid. Our detention only lasted two days, then came the glorious news that Madrid was saved. The first contingent of the International Brigade had arrived. My safe-conduct, signed by F.A.I., played no small part in their decision to let us proceed to Valencia.

This incident, small as it seems in perspective, had unforeseen results. Forrest was well known as a foreign correspondent. He had disappeared without trace, somewhere on the road between Madrid and Valencia, and it was assumed that he had been murdered and his body was lying in some wayside ditch. There was a proper hue and cry. Fortunately no such apprehension was felt about me. Except for the Barragans and some Embassy officials, no one, not even my husband, had the slightest

idea that I was in Spain. Indeed, I was supposed to be in Moscow, enjoying my usual Autumn vacation. In the years that followed, I found it discreet to keep my journeys to and from Spain as unpublicised as possible.

We went on to Valencia, where del Vayo repeated his request that we should return immediately to England, and that Forrest through his paper and I through Parliamentary contacts should try to arrange for a delegation to go to Spain. We stopped overnight for a rest in Barcelona and forty-eight hours after leaving Valencia arrived in London. I was tired, dirty and hungry but I went straight to the House. My idea was that Forrest, after visiting his paper, should meet me in the Lobby, and in the meantime I would try to arrange an all-party meeting, in a committee room upstairs, for Forrest to address. A requisition signed by members from all three parties is necessary before such a meeting can take place.

I waited in the Lobby until people began to arrive, so that I could catch them as they went first to the post office for their mail. Everyone I button-holed seemed very excited, certain that there would be a crowded meeting to hear Forrest, risen from the dead. Megan Lloyd George signed for the Liberals and Dai Grenfell for Labour. Then I left the requisition in Dai's hands to get a Tory signature, book the committee room and make all the further arrangements, which could only be done by a Member.

As a matter of courtesy I thought I should see Attlee and tell him what I had done. I waited until Mr Speaker's procession had made its routine way through the Lobby, then sent in a green card asking Attlee if he would see me after Questions on a matter of extreme urgency. It is the only time I have been angry with Clem, for whom I had great respect and real affection. He kept me waiting three hours and when at last he came was most uncooperative. The matter of a delegation had already been raised in a debate on Spain during the previous week and turned down. Nothing could be done officially. If I found it possible to arrange a delegation willing to face the obvious risks, then it was without his sanction and against his advice!

I was angry but not discouraged. I had no doubt I would be successful and that in time even Attlee would come round to my way of thinking—in which conjecture I proved correct. In

December 1937, when things were very quiet, Attlee with a Parliamentary delegation visited the British Battalion of the International Brigade, took the clenched fist salute and, on his return home, wrote these words to the Brigade :

I would assure the Brigade of my admiration for their courageous devotion to the cause of freedom and social justice. I shall try to tell the comrades at home of what I have seen. Workers of the World unite.

In that atmosphere anyone could be carried away. From henceforth, the No. 1 Company of the Battalion was known as 'The Major Attlee Company'.

I have never seen Committee Room C so packed as it was that evening. Forrest told his story quietly and unemotionally, but with consummate force. It was followed by a barrage of questions. A delegation was chosen—I suppose I should say it chose itself—led by Dai Grenfell, to go to Madrid. I saw Don Pablo the next morning. His delight was overwhelming and he promised that all arrangements would be immediately put in hand. This was the *real* genesis of the Aid Spain Committee, which did such magnificent work throughout the war and indeed for long after in the settlement of refugees from Franco's revenge.

A small incident from that time comes to my mind. Amid all the excitement, I had completely forgotten, until reminded by my secretary, that I was presenting speech-day prizes at a Girls' Grammar School in Hertfordshire, that very afternoon. I had no speech prepared—most unusual for me as I am not one of those fortunate people who can think quickly and logically on my feet. I was very tired and over-excited, and for a moment was tempted to get through to the Headmistress and ask her whether she would mind if I got a colleague from the office to take my place. But only for a moment. Why shouldn't these girls learn something of what was going on in a country they only knew from their history lessons? I did not intend to say anything to the Governors with whom I was lunching—they might raise objections—I decided just to spring it on them.

So when I was called on after the Head had given her Report, I began, "Suppose you lived in a country where education was

denied to girls like yourselves, would you be prepared to fight, even perhaps to give your lives for this right, which you all take for granted? I have just returned from such a country. Yesterday morning I began a journey back from Madrid." The effect was electric. Certainly it was not a speech day when everyone looked bored, or fidgeted nervously as they wondered whether they would acquit themselves with credit in the concert to come.

In thanking me the Head Girl put down her prepared speech and made an earnest plea to her school-fellows to start an Aid Spain Committee. I received regular contributions from these girls throughout the war.

II

Whilst I had been absent from London, the Committee, with which I was to be most closely associated during the Spanish war, had been formed. Isabel Brown, a dedicated communist, had been receiving sums of money from all over the country to be used for Spanish relief. Medical aid was urgently needed: doctors, nurses, trucks and their drivers, and supplies of all kinds. Isabel set about finding people willing to sit on an all-party committee who would undertake the task of raising funds, interviewing personnel, and sending all these things and people to Spain. She brought together the Spanish Medical Aid Committee. We had three doctors on the committee, one representing the T.U.C., and I became its honorary secretary. The initial work of arranging meetings and raising funds was easy. It was quite common to raise £1,000 at a meeting, besides plates full of rings, bracelets, brooches, watches and jewellery of all kinds. Isabel and I had a technique for taking collections which was most effective, and, although I was never so effective as Isabel (I was too emotional and likely to burst into tears at a moment's notice), I improved. In the end, either of us could calculate at a glance how much a meeting was worth in hard cash.

The work soon became so onerous that my job as honorary secretary was relieved by the appointment of George Jeger as salaried secretary. His work through the next three years kept S.M.A.C. running on oiled wheels. I don't think we ever had a moment's anxiety—supplies, instruments, drugs,

vehicles, above all doctors, nurses and drivers, had to be found. All personnel going to Spain had to be interviewed and vetted by the committee; the first medical unit was sent out under Sinclair Loutit. I don't think we made many mistakes, but driving up to the front with medical supplies was dangerous work and several of our drivers were wounded. We suffered a severe loss in the death of George Green who was in charge of all our convoys. No one was to blame for this: we were finding our way in unknown territory. But we couldn't go on risking valuable lives, or ambulances and trucks full of supplies, trying to find hospitals or the front in a chaotic situation and with scarcely anyone speaking the language. It was all too amateurish and haphazard. We needed a focal point and someone resident in Spain to whom all supplies should be sent and all personnel report for posting.

When we interviewed Rosita Davson, we doubted whether she would fit such a tough assignment—a tiny, vivacious brunette, she had only one qualification no one else possessed: she was a brilliant linguist, speaking French, German, Russian and fluent Spanish. For such a cosmopolitan crowd as we had working for us in Spain, this was essential. Moreover she had lived in Spain for some years and knew her way about the country. We found a villa for her in Valencia and later a flat in Barcelona. We had certainly been deceived by Rosita's appearance. She was tough all right, resilient, never depressed, and she could work round the clock if the need arose.

I spent two summer holidays with her in Valencia, helping her to get supplies up to the hospitals and, much later in the war, up to the Ebro Front. Just up the road from our Villa, Peter Churchill, our treasurer, shared a villa with the Soviet airmen. Peter was an agreeable, but incalculable person, making strange and unaccountable forays into Turkey and other South European countries. How he got in and out, I never knew, but anyone who has read his autobiography will recognise that he is a strange and elusive person. When later I managed his own bureau in London, I found myself in very deep water indeed.

III

Early in the spring of 1937 an incident occurred which set in train a series of events that brought me into contact with the

war in a closer way than any of my journeys back and forth with supplies. By now Franco had realised that Madrid was not going to fall into his hands like a ripe plum. He withdrew from the University City salient, reorganised and re-equipped Mola's army of the North, and decided that an attack on the Basque Provinces, directed specifically on Bilbao, would give him a badly-needed prestige victory, and put into his hands the valuable iron ore of the region. "Three weeks," he said. His optimism seemed well-founded. He had all the information he needed concerning the defences of the city, the number, deployment, and equipment of the Basque Forces. This information had been supplied to him by a treacherous Basque officer, who had driven his own car across the lines and sold the Basques down the river; a perfect example of the Fifth Column at work.

But what Franco had not counted on was the tough spirit of the Basque people and their fierce national pride. All at once Bilbao became headline news in the English papers, tremendous interest having been sparked off by an act of unparalleled courage and heroism. Across the water at St Jean de Luz, there were British merchantmen—food ships subscribed by this country—which had been forbidden by the Government to enter Bilbao harbour. It was said to be mined, and the Spanish cruiser *Canarias* kept guard over it. Fed up with waiting, one merchantman decided to take the risk and was intercepted by the *Canarias* five miles from shore. Three small Basque trawlers fought the cruiser until they had been shot to pieces, and nearly all their crews were lost. The blockade from the sea was now complete. Stories of hunger and dive-bombing on a city with which we had many ties filled the British public with dismay which turned to fury when Parliament callously declared that they had no responsibility for our shipping and could do nothing to protect it—after all, Queen Victoria once stayed in Bilbao, when visiting Spain.

Our Committee's meetings of protest were packed. At a big demo in the North, when I was taking a collection, a broad Yorkshire voice from the back of the hall announced, "You can take away my cheque for £1,000 tonight, young woman, provided you give me an assurance it will all be spent on help for Bilbao." My assurance was only too readily given. I travelled to London over-night and, with the precious cheque in my

handbag, was on the door-step of the Basque Delegation, first thing in the morning. They had no doubt about what they needed most: dive bombing had been so serious that a travelling hospital, to give casualties first aid treatment, was an urgent necessity. My Yorkshire cheque, and all we could scrape together from S.M.A.C. funds, would go a long way towards providing this.

About a week later, as I arrived at my flat with a heavy cold, my housekeeper announced that a Spanish gentleman was waiting to see me, and that she had let him into my flat because he had said his business was very urgent. Urgent it was indeed! Could I go to Bilbao—somehow or other? The children must be evacuated at once.

"How on earth can I get there?" I asked incredulously. The harbour was mined and blockaded. To accompany our travelling hospital on the long and arduous journey by road, even if it were ready in time, was impossible for a woman on her own. "Then how?" I asked, still unbelieving.

"We could fly you to St Jean de Luz," he replied calmly. "At the moment a business plane leaves there once a day for Bilbao. We would make all the arrangements to find you a place on it." He outlined his plans so reasonably, with no idea that I might refuse to go and live in a beleaguered city, bombed and starving, and undertake such a terrifying responsibility as the evacuation of its children, that it never even occurred to me to say "No".

"Tomorrow morning then," he continued. "The car will call for you at ten o'clock."

Sid Blake, our genial deputy secretary at Hamilton House, had a good story about this sudden departure. "I sent Leah home with what appeared a bad attack of 'flu coming on. Stay in bed a week, I told her. I don't want all your department coming down with it. The next morning I heard her broadcasting from Bilbao. What a woman!"

At that time everyone tuned in to Radio Bilbao deeply sympathetic to the city's agony. During the whole time I was there I broadcast almost every evening.

My journey proved quite uneventful except for the short trip from St Jean. It was the businessmen who put the wind up me. Every time a plane passed overhead, they crouched down in their seats, blasting Franco, in language which, in

spite of my inadequate Spanish, sounded to me extremely blasphemous. Later I became accustomed to these strange oaths and regarded them as ordinary parlance.

At the airport there was no one to meet me. I had not been expected until the following day, so I did what every anxious traveller does in a strange city, I took a car and asked to be driven to the British Consulate. Arrived at the Consulate, I was astonished to see a lamb with a ribbon round its neck frisking on the lawn. My astonishment at seeing the lamb was as nothing compared with the Consul's astonishment at finding a lone Englishwoman on his door-step.

"You must go back at once," he said firmly. "I can't accept responsibility for you. I've had trouble enough over the Romillys with Churchill demanding they be got out. Every day it becomes more impossible to use the plane to St Jean. You may stay at the consulate tonight and tomorrow I will arrange a seat for you on the morning plane."

Equally firmly I replied, "I'm not going back. I don't ask you to accept responsibility for me. I'm here at the request of the Basque Government, through their Delegation in London, and I propose to evacuate Basque children to England for dispersal throughout my country until Franco is defeated. All I ask you to do is to present me to President Aguirré."

As this seemed the only way of getting rid of a disagreeable and importunate woman, he grumpily assented to the arrangements. One way and another, I had a lot of trouble with Mr Stevenson during my stay in Bilbao. He was a pleasant and courteous gentleman himself, but he acted as my go-between for our Foreign Office and Home Office, who were both unpleasant and discourteous. In the end, with the help of my friend Philip Jordan, I out-manoeuvred them; but that's another story, and one for which Mr Stevenson bore me no malice.

Many years later I met him in Zagreb, where he was Consul. He had suffered much during the war. He was torpedoed and spent several days in an open boat, as a result of which he contracted pneumonia which led to the tuberculosis from which he later died. During dinner with him, I learned the story of the lamb. They had bought it as soon as it was born, with the intention of fattening it up on the pasture of their lawn and killing it when rations became intolerably low. Poor innocent creature! They tied a ribbon around its neck and it became the

pet of the consulate staff. After all cats were much more easily come by and, properly cooked, very succulent, provided one did not know what one was eating—more like chicken than rabbit.

At the Presidencia, where Mr Stevenson himself drove me through the tag-end of a raid, quite a crowd of Ministers and Officials from the Departamento de Asistencia Social were assembled to meet me, with a feast of tomatoes, beans, fruit and good Spanish wine. If I had any hope that this frugal fare, on which I was to subsist during the next few weeks, would be a slimming diet, I was in for a disappointment. Carbanthos beans do nothing for the weight, except add to it.

Within the first few minutes, I was in for a shock. I had several times met small groups of refugee children in France, usually between 250 and 500, and from Madrid and Valencia. I asked the President how many children he had in mind. "About 4,000," said he, and, without waiting for my gasp of astonishment, went on, "They'll be in family groups, aged between five and sixteen, and they will be in the charge of their priests and teachers—about 300 adults." My first coherent thought was that perhaps the Basque Government had chartered an ocean liner, maybe one of the *Queens*, but since I had lost the power of speech I said nothing.

I had arrived in Bilbao on April 24 and on the next day had gone to Mass with the Foreign Secretary and his family, spending the rest of the day in his office. The morning of the 26th I spent quietly at the office of Asistencia Social, discussing in outline the plans for evacuation. In the afternoon I made my way down to La Prensa where a group of journalists had invited me for a drink, among them Philip Jordan and George Steer, who during the next few weeks were to prove towers of strength and encouragement to me. A day begun so quietly was to end in indescribable horror and dismay.

"A raid's coming up," said Jordan. "Do you want to go down to the shelter?" I shook my head, so we went outside. Phil's ear had caught the sound of bombers in the air, although there had been no warning. Across the hills to the east the air was alive with Heinkels as wave after wave drove in from the sea. They were followed by Junkers. Horror-stricken, the Basques amongst us shouted, "Guernica! they're bombing Guernica!" It seemed incredible that such a monstrous thing could happen to this quiet little market town, renowned from time immemorial

as the home of Basque liberation where, before the famous oak tree, rulers of Spain had traditionally sworn to observe Basque local rights. Helpless to do anything we watched from the hills. Until nearly eight in the evening, incendiary bombs and high explosives rained down every twenty minutes. The town was open and defenceless; it was crowded with market day visitors and as people fled from the destruction they were dive-bombed and machine-gunned from the air. The roads out of the town were jammed with dead and injured: 1,654 killed; 889 injured.

We drove over that night, to find such a scene of utter devastation as will be printed for ever on our minds. It cannot be described in words; only Picasso's 'Guernica' can depict its stark horror. If this raid was intended to destroy the morale of the people it utterly failed in its purpose. Bitter hatred against the Germans, who were responsible, and against non-intervention controls, which were to operate from the end of that month, filled the hearts of the people with a cold fury. Morale stiffened and, for the time being at least, this led to a heart-warming spurt in the rebuilding of defences, a task in which all might take part. I often went out at night to help in the work of strengthening the 'Inner Iron Ring'. Since we were sometimes within talking distance of the enemy, I was issued with a permit to carry arms. The destruction of the Spanish battleship *España*, by a mine off the harbour, and the surrender of the Italians in Bermeo to a battalion of the U.G.T. brought a little cheer.

All the same, those of us who were in close touch with the Government knew how deserted and alone the Basques felt, in spite of their resolution and courage. They had neither the moral nor physical support which the Valencia Government might have given them. It seemed to us as if Valencia felt that what went on in the North was of no importance. It can only be said in their defence that the long flight over occupied country would have been dangerous, perhaps impossible. For Barcelona, no such excuse can be offered. It would have been a simple matter to have sent help, but there they were too much occupied with ridiculous internecine quarrels between P.O.U.M. and the Anarchists, and between the Equerra and P.S.U.C., to understand what was happening in Bilbao, and to realise its significance.

Amid the anxiety and grief, the preparations for evacuation went on all the time. Evacuations from our own great cities during World War II became quite commonplace, but no one can imagine how different in scope were the evacuations from Bilbao. In Britain, we had ample time to plan. In Bilbao the preparations had to be telescoped into a few weeks. They were made under heavy aerial and earth bombardment and under threat of the fall of the city. Evacuation was by sea to foreign countries, and therefore liable to frequent interruption as the policies of the receiving countries changed. No country was more guilty of these cruel changes than our own. The Basques had no sympathy either from the Home Office or the Foreign Office. Both regarded the whole thing as a nuisance and myself as an officious busy-body. They changed the ages; they changed the policy of receiving the children in family groups; and they demanded that the London Committee should guarantee ten shillings per week per head for each child—this at a time when they expected the children of their own unemployed to survive on five bob a week.

But I stuck in my toes. I made some blistering broadcasts and determined that our plans would not be altered by one jot or one tittle. With the support of a vast number of influential people in England, on whom I rained innumerable telegrams, I declared I would leave with 4,000 children arranged in family groups aged five to sixteen and 300 adults to care for them. In the end it was only with the connivance of my friend Philip Jordan and Pro-consul Oganguerran that I was successful.

I do not think the full story of the evacuations from Bilbao has ever been told. In books about the civil war which mention them, there are many stupid errors. The Basque Government were so extraordinarily efficient and I was so filled with admiration for them that I should like to put the record straight. In addition to the evacuation of children, going to England with me, other refugees were being sent away all the time—old people and invalids—as hospitality and transport became available. The most careful records of each child were kept by *Asistencia Social*, and duplicates in the form of lists and indexes went with each party. There were health checks and vaccination.

I was constantly at *Asistencia Social*, assisting and advising and, in spite of continuous air raids, the work went on all round the clock. But there is a more important aspect of evacuation

than the perfection of technical detail, and that is the preparation of a right psychological approach and an enlightened attitude to the whole exercise. This is where we failed in England and the reason why so many families returned home after the first fear of the bombs had vanished.

When I arrived in Bilbao, the Government had decided on this policy, but the people had scarcely begun to think about it. In a month an atmosphere had been created which made the civil population realise that evacuation was the safest single precaution their Government could take on their behalf. Before Santander and Bilbao had fallen more than 100,000 non-combatants had left for Russia, England, France, Belgium and Catalonia. The atmosphere was created in three ways: by careful publicity; by absolute fairness in the choice of *evacuados* and in the order of their going; and by the creation of confidence in the people responsible, especially in those who had children in their care.

Radio and Press were requisitioned for publicity purposes; the President, his Ministers, well-loved priests and public personalities all made broadcasts. My photograph and interviews with Trade Union and political leaders appeared daily in the papers; every day I wrote 'A Letter to Mothers', and all my broadcasts to England were translated and distributed. In a short time, everyone was talking about evacuation and regarding it as inevitable.

To establish a feeling of fairness in choice, invitations were issued in the first place to all those persons who wished to leave Bilbao and who had sufficient means to support themselves or friends to whom they could go. They left on the *Habana* and the *Goizeka-Izarra*. This gave time to make preparations abroad for the reception of refugees without means, the first of whom (1,000 women and 2,500 children) left for France on May 6. Whenever a group of such refugees was ready, it was given precedence over wealthier persons, or went with them, as for example on May 9, when the French Government sent three boats unexpectedly. They were filled with 2,000 old people and children, half of whom could pay their way and maintain themselves; the other half poor people going to colonies in the French Basque Provinces arranged by the Basque Government.

On May 16 the *Habana* and the *Goizeka-Izarro* returned from their first journey and took off 4,000 refugees, mainly

people who could pay their fares and maintain themselves. But for the vacillations of the British Government, our children should have been with this allocation. I was bitterly disappointed.

The people now understood that, while wealth could claim no privileges, there was no arbitrary holding back of people willing to make their own arrangements. Another decision helped to create an atmosphere of fair dealing, and that was the allocation of *evacuados* from among the political parties in strict proportion to their electoral representation in the Basque Government. The British Government, whose navy had come to protect the evacuation ships, also insisted 'that persons, supporting General Franco should be included in the party if they desired evacuation.' They need not have bothered to make such a ridiculous provision. To us there were neither Anarchists nor Nationalists—only people in danger of their lives asking for safety.

The establishment of confidence was as important as the establishment of fair play. Whenever possible, whole families, mothers, their children and elderly relatives, were evacuated together. France accepted refugee groups of this kind; and those sent to Eastern Spain and the Basque colonies in France were also family groups. But many thousands of children were to be evacuated, without their families, to England, Belgium and Russia. Confidence was established in the hearts of mothers of such children when many teachers volunteered to accompany them—mothers were willing to put their children in charge of teachers they knew. In the same way many young women offered to go as *auxiliars*. Thanks to an ingenious numbering system, the greatest care was taken to see that every child travelled either with his own teacher or with a family friend as *auxiliar*. Then, because most Basques are devout Catholics, many priests accompanied our expedition.

Although nominally I was in charge only of the evacuation to England, I was present at all embarkations and received much publicity in the city. I went with the President to mass meetings; I was available at the Presidencia for interviews with press and leaders of political, religious and social groups, and at the Department of Assistencia Social for more homely talks with parents, teachers and *auxiliars*. In a few weeks I was recognised on the streets and the mothers of Bilbao began to feel their children were in charge of someone in whom they could place their trust. I had an uncomfortable feeling that this extraordinary

treatment was a kind of precaution against the British Government's lack of enthusiasm.

After the evacuations of May 16, I began to feel anxious. It seemed as if we were never going to get away. I wasn't worried about my own safety, although the 'Radio General' was constantly making threats against me. I was afraid that the carefully built confidence would evaporate as it became known that there was a growing reluctance on the part of the British Government to accept any of the plans so carefully detailed by the Basques. In particular the refusal to accept any child under eight or over fourteen undermined all our ideas about families staying together, older brothers and sisters looking after their little ones. Were these tiny children to be left behind in a city about to fall into the hands of the enemy, the young girls to be raped by the *tercio* and their brothers shot as traitors?

I began to send out imploring telegrams—to the Archbishop of Canterbury, to the Catholic Archbishop, to Lloyd George, to Citrine. The answers came back, helpful and encouraging. "All right," said the authorities, "we'll leave it to the Consul to decide." But Mr Stevenson was adamant. He could not advise His Majesty's Government to accept 4,000 children of all ages. I had played my last card. I thought of England en fête for the Coronation, and for the first time in all those weeks my nerve went. I trailed along to see Philip Jordan and broke into a fit of weeping on his shoulder.

"Please don't cry, chum, we'll think of something. Here I'll give you my beret!"—his beret with its Basque badge, given to him by a soldier long since dead! But he gave me more than a beret. In ten minutes flat, he evolved a complete plan for out-manoeuvring London and taking back with me 4,000 children in family groups with their escorts: just what I had set my mind on doing since I first talked to Aguirré.

"This evening," began the conspirator, "we are going with Stevenson, by submarine, to St Jean, to celebrate the Coronation. With the Consul out of the way, your buddy the pro-consul is in charge. Get to work on him. Con him into sending a telegram in the name of the Consul agreeing to your arrangements." I had no hesitation in doing all I could to persuade Señor Oganguerren to send that telegram. It went off that same night and the reply, in confirmation, came in the morning. Mr Stevenson never knew what had hit him—at least not for many

years, by which time having suffered the utmost rigours of war himself he forgave me. From then on things began to move very quickly. Two pediatric doctors, Dr Richard Hill and Dr Audrey Russell, were flown out by the Committee to help in the final stages of embarkation and the journey by sea. The yacht *Habana* was made ready. That it was a luxury yacht designed to carry 800 people didn't worry me. We should pack in somehow.

At last the night of departure arrived. The quay was a thick, black mass of parents, defying bombs as the children, some happy and excited, some in tears, were taken aboard in orderly companies. Head to tail the señoritas laid out our precious cargo—on the bulkheads, in the swimming pool, in the state rooms and along the alley ways, for all the world like the little *sardinas* about which they were always singing; and out there, in the grey waters, two ships of the British Navy stood by to guard our going.

I don't know if sea-sickness can be brought on by mass hysteria; if so, that was what my children suffered from. For two dreadful days and nights Richard, Audrey and I slipped and slithered from one pool of diarrhoea and vomit to another, giving drinks of water and assuring them it wasn't the fascists who had stirred up the troubled waters against them.

We reached Southampton Water on a bright Sunday morning. Miraculously the señoritas had cleaned up the children and changed their clothes. Many of them had made their Confessions on the Saturday evening, and I was asked by the priest in charge if it would be possible to bring a priest from Southampton to celebrate the Mass. I sent a wireless message, and within the hour my request had been met. I shall never forget that picture—moving in its simple piety, the young kneeling figures with upturned faces—as the Celebrant raised the Host for adoration.

I wish it were the last my memory held of those hapless young ones, and not the heart-rending scene of sorrow in our camp, some weeks later, when the city fell. But for the moment my work ended on that bright May morning. I had endured the siege, and disappointment after disappointment, but I had never wavered from my original intention. I had brought away 4,000 Basque children, in family groups with their escorts, to a place of safety.

The tented camp at Stoneham, just outside Southampton,

was organised marvellously by the English Committee. The children were well-behaved; and there was little sickness. But one strange thing always saddened the many helpers who came in from the surrounding countryside. It was impossible to make the children believe that the food would not run out: there was never a meal when we did not see them surreptitiously hiding some part of it, in their pockets or tucked up their jerseys. To those who have starved for months, the threat of hunger is always there.

On the day Bilbao fell, our personnel had been given the sad news early by the Basque Delegation in London, and we spent all the afternoon discussing how we should let the children know. In the end we decided that as it was usual for the children to gather round the loudspeaker, to listen to the six o'clock news from our radio, it would only frighten them if we told them not to listen on that evening. As the news came across, there was first stunned silence; then a pandemonium of weeping and wailing broke out. Contrary to some reports, no one threw any sticks or stones at their priests. The vast majority of the children rushed back to their tents to find what consolation they could in the arms of their señoritas. A very few boys tried to smash the radio, calling it a fascist liar, and then rushed out of the camp in their furious anger, but they soon came back, remembering that they had responsibilities to younger brothers and sisters.

Many of the children became hysterical; Audrey and I went backwards and forwards from tent to tent, administering sedatives, encouraging the señoritas; cuddling the little ones who didn't understand. It was after four in the morning, before the last soft moans of 'Madre mia' ended in one long profound sigh that tore our hearts.

Our intention was to empty the camp before the summer ended. Catholic boys' and girls' schools, private homes, and houses specially provided and administered by the Committee, all gathered the children into their fold. When everyone was so generous and warm-hearted, it is perhaps invidious to choose out two organisations for special mention. The first was the London Teachers' Association who provided and entirely maintained the 'Leah Manning Home', a beautiful house on Piercing Hill, Theydon Bois, which housed twenty to thirty children. It had some very distinguished people on its committee, includ-

ing Professor Blackett, while Dr Fry gave devoted medical service over many years, never charging fees. Everyone in the neighbourhood was anxious to give the children treats, and in return our boys were willing to go anywhere to give displays of their splendid Basque dances or play soccer with schools in North London. The little ones went shyly to the village school; the older boys, with all the Basque brio at their command, went to West Essex Technical College.

The other outstanding contribution was made by the Salvation Army who took a very large contingent of boys and girls to stay in what had been their Officers' Training College in Clapton. On the Saturday after the children arrived I went rather diffidently to ask if I might make arrangements for them to go to the nearby Catholic Church to attend Mass on Sunday. The Commissioner smiled sweetly. "My dear, that's all arranged for. The priest will be here at eight o'clock on Sunday morning to celebrate in our own Congress Hall." I was not astounded. A display of ecumenical understanding is what I should have expected from so compassionate and kindly a personality.

I am often asked, "What happened to your Basque children?"

When the war broke out, many parents claimed them back, a natural reaction now that they were under fire again. Only the older ones who knew that a fascist jail awaited them refused to go. Many of the señoritas went to Mexico, but the boys stayed in England, making their contribution to our war effort, some in factories, some in the Merchant Navy. In many cases they married English girls and now have grown-up families. I often hear from them and as I look through the long lists of names—'Expedicion de niños Inglaterra', Aurora, Pilar, Encarnación, Fidel, Rafael—they sound like a peal of bells in my memory and I see again the merry brown faces and flying curls as they tear about the camp.

Then I take out, and read once more, the letter which never fails to move me.

North Stoneham Camp
Eastleigh, Hants.

Dear Sirs,*

The undersigned on behalf of orphaned children of militiamen wish to express that we are the sons and daughters of

* Translated from the Spanish.

poor workers who at the beginning of the uprising of the traitor 'generals' rose against them and thus found their death.

We have been given shelter by a second mother, this second mother we do not know how to thank for her attentions and kindnesses shown to us; this all the more so since we are here only temporarily so that when we are installed permanently, we just cannot imagine how wonderful it will be.

For all this to our second mother and to the committee we give our most grateful thanks.

Signature of our señorita [teachers] and ourselves. Señorita : Segura (Esperanza Campedre), Antonio Gallego, Jose Gallego, Antonio Gallego, Victoria Gallego, Geneveva Gallego, Maria Luise Gallego, Jose Enrique Murquis, Carmen Margalet, Eugenia Margalet, Begonis Margalet, Primitivo Rojas, Rufino Tomas, Gerardo Tomas, Benito Tomas, Alvarez Martinez, Jose Maria Delia, Domingo Arana, Maria Teresa Careros, Jose Luis Cisneros, Esperanzo Margalet, Antonio Montero, Ampero Moreno, Carmen Moreno, Salome Moreno, Maria Luise Martinez, Carmen Belón, Ascension Belón, Josefa Montero, Josefa Maria Montero, Amelia Montero.

It will be seen from this list of names how the parents' wishes were carried out in respect of their children travelling in family groups.

IV

Before the end of the summer I was in Spain again. Early in July a cable came from Rosita saying that supplies were urgently needed for our hospital at Gerona, where typhoid had broken out. I decided to go with the truck myself as I had personal reasons for wishing to see Dr Glaser, our doctor in charge at Gerona, and a German Jew. When the Hitler persecution of the Jews began, he fled to Spain, where doctors were warmly welcomed. I had visited Gerona several times and, partly on the basis of our shared experiences in Germany, had formed a close friendship with the family—Mrs Glaser, a trained nurse, and their young daughter. The previous year, when the value of the peseta began to fall, and life was very uncertain, Dr Glaser asked me to become a trustee for his son Kurt: to take charge of sufficient funds to see that his education through school,

university and hospital was completed, so that whatever happened to his family, Kurt could eventually practice medicine in England. Kurt had been a pupil at Dr Hahn's famous school which I had visited some years earlier. When the school came under Hitler's displeasure and was moved to England, Kurt came with it.

I had lost no time in getting to know Kurt, then a boy of seventeen—charming, intelligent, very good-looking and quite indistinguishable from any English boy of the same age and class. I wanted to give his parents some account of our relationship and also discuss with them Kurt's certainty that England would some time be involved in a war with Hitler, and his over-whelming desire to serve, if this should happen.

But when I got to Barcelona, Rosita had received an urgent message from the Republican War Council, at that time sitting in Barcelona, to take everything we could spare up to the Ebro Front. The Council had decided to launch a diversionary attack across the river to relieve the pressure on Valencia and Sagunto, and had set up a hospital in one of the deep natural caves, common in that part of Spain.

We were not sure of our route, but I had an instinctive trust in Rosita's ability to find her way anywhere, and her Spanish was so fluent, she could always ask if she thought we were lost. We studied our maps carefully; loaded up the truck that night and decided to set out at dawn. We reckoned that in the long July days, we might get to the hospital and back to Barcelona before dusk and the nightly bombing began.

We had an uneventful journey, only stopping once at a farm so primitive it had probably not changed its agricultural methods since mediaeval times. The hospital was a marvel of ingenuity, lit by electricity and with a good operating theatre and a large, comfortable ward. It could neither be seen from the road above, along which men and trucks moved ceaselessly on their way to the front, nor reached from below, which was a jungle of jagged rocks, stunted trees and rank-growing weeds. We should never have found it on our own, but look-out men had been posted for some hours to guide us.

After lunch and a good gossip with Faith, our one English nurse who was working there, Rosita began to fidget about getting away. We were just ready to go, when a young Spanish surgeon came from the side of a bed where saline drips and

other medical impedimenta stood on a side table. He looked worn out; then, anxiously addressing himself to me, said, "Señora, could I beg that you stay the night?" Rosita began to say that it was impossible to leave the flat untenanted, anything might happen during the night. He took no notice of Rosita, but continued to beg me to stay. "There is a young English—no, I think, Welsh soldier here. He is badly shot through the pancreas. I have operated, but there is no hope. Yet, I think he may perhaps regain consciousness for a short time during the night. If there was someone by his side who could speak to him in his own tongue, and perhaps write to his mother after, to tell her we did all we could . . . he had great courage." The young surgeon's voice choked a little before he went on, "We have only one nurse here who speaks English—Nurse Faith, but I cannot spare her—she's my theatre sister."

That was how I found all Spanish doctors. Amid the bloodshed, death and deep anxiety of those days there was an almost womanly tenderness towards all members of the I.B. who came under their care. They had come so far to fight for a cause which was not their personal cause, not even the cause of their country, but they were led by a deep instinctive knowledge that this was the prelude to a monstrous attack on democracy everywhere—that human liberty was at stake.

So I went and sat by the boy's bedside.

The hours dragged by. Sometimes Faith came to bring me black coffee and look at her unconscious patient. At about four o'clock, the boy opened his eyes. He stared at me. In a voice of astonished wonder he said, "Leah Manning!" Then smiling quietly, "You see I made it, comrade." He closed his eyes again and I went to fetch Faith. It was the end of one boy's heroism and tragedy which had begun in a quiet Welsh mining village a few years earlier.

This is how it had come to pass: Mosley had made application for the Town Hall at Swansea for one of his fascist demonstrations and all the Welsh valleys were aflame with indignation and the determination that his application should be turned down. I was invited to address a rally, and as I drove over the quiet passes from Carmarthen where I was staying, my thoughts constantly turned to Spain: there men, women and children were daily giving their lives in the fight against this evil fascism, which Mosley espoused.

Perhaps I was over-tired, for I ended my speech in a broken voice. A boy standing with his father at the edge of the crowd came up to me. "Would you come back to our cottage, Mam's sure to have a good spread for Sunday tea. Refresh you it will before your journey back." How I enjoyed that tea and talk. I can even remember what we had for tea—delicious sandwiches of chives chopped up in cream cheese, and Welsh cakes. But the boy was most anxious to talk about Spain and the International Brigade. As he walked back to the car with me he was full of questions as to how he could join himself. I told him I thought he was too young for recruitment, but I heard later he had somehow obtained a passage to Barcelona; that his ship had been bombed in the harbour and he had ended up in one of our hospitals. After that it was relatively simple to become a unit in the Republican forces. When he died, he was already a seasoned soldier who had taken part in many engagements. On what receptive ground my message had fallen.

After we got back to Barcelona, I found time to visit my friends the Glasers. Our truck had to go straight back into service, so I decided to wait for Peter Churchill, who was coming up from Valencia with a car and a driver, to return to England. I wasn't very happy about my visit to Gerona. Typhoid had taken its toll. Mrs Glaser had been very ill and the doctor looked exhausted. More than anything else I was disturbed to find that their sick daughter had been whisked off for treatment to Switzerland by two Americans, said to be working for the League of Nations. Although I had the greatest admiration for members of the I.B. from America, like those of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, and for those American airmen I met occasionally, I never had much use for their do-gooders who seemed to visit Spain, bringing a few food parcels, more out of curiosity than for any useful purpose.

But this was quite a different affair. For years the child was parted from her family, and in the end involved in the deepest tragedy. The way in which, later, she was kidnapped, separated from her American husband and two small children, sent to the Soviet salt mines and only released when she was on the point of death, and my own involvement in her story, is much too long to relate here, and perhaps it would be unwise to do so. I will only say that I bitterly resented the cold and inhuman treatment she received at the hands of our own Foreign Office.

The refusal of the United States to allow her to be reunited with her highly-placed husband, one understands: they have a pathological fear of communist contagion. Such fears are not supposed to operate in England. Here she might have settled happily with her mother, Mrs Glaser, who was to suffer more than anyone deserves.

I waited in Barcelona for Peter to come up from Valencia with transport and we set out for the border at once. Growing apprehension had not yet turned into panic—that came a week later. Nevertheless all Catalonia seemed to be out on the roads. Previously we had always made a break in our journey at Figueras, but now we found that every hotel was full. People with money were already leaving the country. It was night when we abandoned our fruitless search for accommodation in Figueras. Low-flying planes were everywhere. We decided to make for the International Tunnel, it at least spelt safety, and the next morning we were on the way to Paris.

I felt a deepening anxiety about Rosita. We had begged her to leave with us, but nothing would move her. There were papers to destroy and the remaining stores to guard, in case, in the retreat, any of our drivers came to the flat needing help. Perhaps it was as well, for later she was able to save the Glasers from what would have been certain death for the doctor. The terrible retreat to the French border is well-known. After the fall of Barcelona, the road was a mass of broken unhappy people, all their illusions destroyed.

But there was still France! What did they expect, these people, when they reached the border? Friends, a warm welcome, relief from hunger, cold, weariness, and the bitterness of defeat? Instead they found the barricades, harsh resentment and the inhospitable waste of Les Boules. The Glasers had been part of that retreat. Mrs. Glaser was sent on to Paris; Dr Glaser, suffering from exhaustion and privation, was left behind. Rosita managed to get to London, and almost immediately Mrs Glaser contrived to get a message through to us, telling us what had happened. She thought her husband was at Argelès or one of the smaller camps among the sand dunes near the sea. Rosita set off at once to find him. After days of searching, she discovered him in a dug-out which he and a comrade had made for themselves. He was at the point of death, but Rosita had food and

drugs, transport and money. By easy stages, she got him to Paris to join his wife.

With the help of the Jewish community in London, we found them a pleasant post in charge of a home for elderly Jewish people. It seemed as if their troubles might be over, and their joy at seeing Kurt, now a young man, was overwhelming. There was nothing to prevent Kurt from going up to University—only his courage and his hatred of the evil forces which had destroyed his family. He longed to get into the air force, but he was not naturalised and although I pulled every string I knew, it proved impossible. So when the war broke out he took the only course open to him at first, joining an A.R.P. Rescue Squad in the East End of London, living and working in that badly blitzed area.

From there he graduated to the Labour Corps in the regular army and went off to France. But it was not long before his appearance and fluent use of three languages attracted attention, and after effecting a change of name, with the approval of the military authorities, he was enlisted in the Green Howards. On the last day of the war, he went out on a dawn patrol and was killed.

But fate had not dealt its last blow at the Glasers. They were so happy when their daughter, no longer a communist, married a highly-placed American in the Civil Commission in Germany. Dr Glaser was now naturalised; he looked forward to the time when his two grandchildren would grow up to take the place of the lost Kurt. Then their daughter vanished into the blue, and the courage of that quiet, patient man ebbed away. Mrs Glaser was left alone. It was many years before she heard of her daughter again, and her story, told to me in my quiet Essex cottage, would have sounded incredible even in a work of fiction.

This was the fate of just one unhappy Jewish family in the bitter thirties. From their comfortable professional life and circle of friends, they were up-rooted, driven from pillar to post, becoming outcast and destitute. They were only one family in tens of thousands.

I thought I was never to see Spain again. I had not been allowed to accompany the children returning to Bilbao. I was told I would be arrested at the frontier if I made the attempt. Several times after the war I asked for a visa: the children were

so often writing, asking me to visit them. But my application was always turned down—*persona non grata*. Then the queerest thing happened. The National Union of Teachers had always kept in touch with the Spanish Teachers' Association and information reached us, in 1947, that a woman member had been condemned to death on an obviously trumped-up charge. Could we do anything to help? No organisation existed at that time for representing political prisoners. Nan Green and I volunteered to go to Spain if we could get visas. They were refused. Then I asked the Foreign Office to make representations, as I was a Member of Parliament: still useless—*persona non grata*.

Then a row blew up over Francis Noel Baker who had entered Spain clandestinely over the Pyrenees. He wanted to watch and report on the kind of reception given to Franco when he visited the Basque country. When it was discovered, the Spanish authorities were indignant. "If," they said, "a Member of Parliament wishes to visit Spain, he has only to apply for a visa in the usual way and one will be granted." At once, and greatly to my surprise, the Foreign Office jumped in. "Mrs Manning M.P. has been applying for a visa all summer; we have also applied on her behalf, but the visa has always been refused." Within twenty-four hours a telegram arrived from Madrid, granting my visa with profuse apologies. They were unaware that Mrs Manning was a Member of Parliament.

I was treated with great courtesy, granted interviews, and allowed to visit the prison in which the teacher was incarcerated and talk to her. I attended her appeal and was successful in getting her sentence reduced to ten years which, I was told, meant she would be out in seven. In spite of all this, I was not very comfortable. I thought that I was being watched and followed. It was in some ways disappointing. I felt unsafe if I tried to visit any former friends, indeed to accomplish anything except the strict purpose of my visit.

Many times after, I tried to get a visa, but it was always refused and now that a visa is no longer necessary I have lost the urge to go. Perhaps, many years hence, in happier times, they will erect the statue of me, with children, in the Park in Bilbao, which was what *Asistencia Social* intended. Except for poignant memories the Spanish chapter is closed for me.

A Conflict of Conscience

DURING THE YEARS from 1935 to the 1938 treachery of Munich, I found myself suffering from a continuous conflict of conscience. The pacifism which had been the main plank of all my political and philosophical thinking was gradually slipping. My thoughts were taking a different shape. I had believed since my teens, since the bitter experience of David's useless death, that war was a barbarous, primitive way of settling differences and that civilised nations should have recourse to diplomatic means. In the League of Nations we had the instrument ready to our hand, strengthened enormously by the adherence of the Soviet Union. Circumstances were changing quickly, and my own staunchly ingrained beliefs seemed incapable of moving. I should have learned my lesson in Spain in 1934, although that was only the prelude to her long agony. Now it was plain for everyone to see that fascist Italy was preparing an attack on Abyssinia, an attack which threatened the whole fabric of the League.

In 1935, the League of Nations Union organised its famous Peace Ballot. Although I felt we were clutching at a straw, I threw all my energies into the task of supporting Lord Cecil. The results were staggering. More than 50 per cent of those who had the opportunity of doing so had voted; more than 11,000,000 voted that we should remain in the League; fewer than 360,000 against; more than 10,400,000 in favour of an all-round reduction in armaments by international agreement; fewer than 870,000 against; more than 9,500,000 for the abolition, by international agreement, of all national air forces; fewer than 1,700,000 against; more than 10,400,000 for the prohibition, by international agreement, of the manufacture and sale of arms for private profit; fewer than 780,000 against. Then came the two most vital questions. If one nation attacks another, should the other nations combine to stop it by economic sanctions? More

than 10,000,000 voted in favour; fewer than 640,000 against. If economic sanctions fail to stop the aggressor should the nations then join against the aggressor in military measures? More than 6,750,000 were in favour; fewer than 2,360,000 against.

Was it possible for a nation to give a clearer, more insistent mandate for collective security through the League? There were people so foolish as to regard the Peace Ballot as a pacifist manoeuvre; even to say later that it encouraged Hitler. Churchill, more far-sighted than most of us, was not one of them. In *The Gathering Storm*, he says;

The Peace Ballot was regarded in many quarters as part of the pacifist campaign. On the contrary Clause 5 (the sanctions clause) offered a positive and courageous policy, which could, at this time, have been followed by an overwhelming measure of national support.

The Peace Ballot took place in March. The Labour Party Conference was at Brighton in October. There, after a long and bitter argument with Hugh Dalton over re-armament, I finally threw off my long-cherished ideals. It was not that I could not see the reality of the fascist peril. I probably had seen it earlier and understood it better than Hugh, for I did not forget to remind him of his former admiration of Mussolini. Also more than most of my contemporaries I had seen, during my visit to Spain in 1934, how insidiously fascism could contaminate the mind of a nation. At last I was convinced that it was the same evil force at work in Italy, in Germany and in Spain.

During the 1935 election, which I fought in Sunderland, it was difficult for me to feel that I was standing on the same platform as Baldwin in support of re-armament: that I was uttering the same sentiments as those of my opponent. But Baldwin was shrewd: he realised how deeply the people of the country wanted to believe in the power both of the League and of collective security. He made these the great issues of the election and won a resounding victory; no one doubted his sincerity. The country only awoke to the fact that he had used it as an election gimmick after the tragedy of Abyssinia. They believed Baldwin when he said, "The League is the sheet anchor of British policy." They had believed Hoare's declaration in response to Mussolini's

threat : the Foreign Secretary's words had met with wild acclaim for they were indeed what we all stood for :

In conformity with its precise and explicit obligations, the League stands, and my country stands, for the collective maintenance of the Covenant, in its entirety and particularly for steady and collective resistance to all acts of unprovoked aggression.

All of us who had believed in collective security felt relieved at that declaration. But there were those who did not believe in the League, one of whom was Cripps, who declared that by imposing sanctions we were giving Mussolini all he wanted without the necessity of fighting for it. There are those who have sought to excuse Cripps; to suggest that he had some true and clear insight into what was going to happen. But Cripps held no crystal ball and, as so often, his words were singularly ill-chosen. They sounded to many people like a clear incitement to Mussolini.

Less than a month later, the nation was astounded by the revelation that Hoare had made a deal with Laval in Paris. A large part of Abyssinia was ceded to Italy. In the words of the prophet Cripps, "Mussolini had got all he wanted without the necessity of fighting for it." There was an outburst of public indignation, so vehement that Baldwin, who had been in collusion with his Foreign Secretary, found it opportune to throw him to the wolves. He was succeeded by another Foreign Secretary, who, when the time came (non-intervention in Spain), acted in precisely the same way.

The effect of the betrayal was deeply felt at the time, but it was not long-lasting. As week succeeded week, and a tiny nation, armed only with the most primitive of weapons, was crushed by poison gas, and metal raining from the skies, people began to wonder if protest was any use. They were disillusioned with the League and doubted its continuing value. Even the re-militarisation of the Rhine by Hitler was accepted without a groan.

During the summer the National Association of Labour Teachers entertained some colleagues from Sudetenland. Our guests gave us a series of lectures on the position in Czechoslovakia and the situation which would arise if Hitler carried out his threats and persisted in his claims. They described the reign of

terror under Henlein, the Nazi leader, and insisted again and again that only England could save them from the tyranny of Nazi slavery. I did not, at that time, accept all we were told. The road to Munich was still a long way off. Before that final betrayal, my total involvement in Spain, of which I have already written, cut me off from everything else. But I saw that it was all part of the same troubled pattern towards which Europe was drifting.

On my way to and from Spain, I would often join the Popular Front crowds in Paris shouting, "Avions pour Espagne", and reflect what a bad influence my country and France had upon each other. Acting alone, there were things they dare not attempt; collusion brought out their meanest traits—Hoare-Laval on Abyssinia, Eden-Blum on non-intervention and, if I could have seen into the future, the mendacity of Suez.

Up to the last moment, Republican Spain had hoped she might survive long enough to join in the common struggle. The Munich pact was a crushing blow to her hopes—another evil Anglo-French plan requiring the immediate cession to Germany, without a plebiscite, of all districts with more than 50 per cent German population. The fears of our Sudeten friends, which I had felt exaggerated, were proved correct as one ultimatum after another was forced on them by their so-called friends.

I worked in Spain, in spite of the constant danger and anxiety, in a kind of euphoria. I suppose it is what men feel in battle, an exaltation, a comradeship which carries them away above hardship and terror. In my case it was something more. I am prone to see both sides of a case, but for once I knew I was right and suffered from no mixed motives. Alas, I came home after the retreat from Barcelona and found only depression: Chamberlain had recognised Franco; what therefore could one do about the Basque children whose parents were asking for their repatriation, because of the threat hanging over England; in particular, what about the older boys and the escorts? And there was the constant irritation of listening to people arguing about Munich.

The nation was divided between those who breathed long, deep sighs of relief that a great danger had been narrowly averted and those who felt furious anger at Chamberlain's shabby betrayal of the Czechs. There were others who kept

chanting the silly slogan 'a year saved'. "Saved for what, in God's name?" I asked. If it was a year saved for us to make those preparations we should have made long since, it must be true for Hitler as well. But it was very much worse: in betraying our Czech allies, we had sacrificed much more than our honour.

Czechoslovakia was magnificently equipped with a formidable air force, a highly organised industrial machine, and the great arsenal at Skoda. No intelligent person believed it was a year saved for England. Of only one thing we were certain. If the guarantees to Poland were not kept, appeasement was at an end. Well, as we all know they were no more than a scrap of paper.

"I can't sit here and wait for Chamberlain's announcement," I said to Will when we knew that war was inevitable. "Let's get down to the coast and find some quiet little pub where we can listen." What instinct took us to Dover? As we stared at the white cliffs and the sea pounding up and breaking in surf at our feet, we felt for the moment 'This is our fortress', but dared not look at the skies which made fools of our hopes.

We found a little pub and sitting over our bread and cheese and beer waited nervously as the clock on the wall ticked away the minutes until the hour should strike. There were half a dozen people in the tiny bar all looking equally strung up. "Couldn't sit at home and see the wife take it," said one bucolic character. I had it on the tip of my tongue to tell him he might have stayed at home to comfort her. Whatever the rest of that little crowd felt, for us it was a lift out of the suffocating miasma of doubt and humiliation we had suffered for eight months. It was a call to arms. Yet in the event there was no call, only a bewildering sense of unreality. The tons of bombs which were to have been dropped on London in the first week simply didn't drop; the ghastly shrouds which I had seen laid out in an infants' school, once full of laughing children, remained empty.

All that summer I had been busy, discussing with Local Education Authorities and Local Associations of the N.U.T. the heart-breaking question of evacuation. The only thing which could stir me to anger were the mothers who said, "If we're going to be bombed, we'll all stay here and be bombed together." How many times at meetings of parents, I tried to hearten the doubtful by telling them the story of the mothers of Bilbao. The

barrage balloons, like great silver elephants riding in the sky, had been a constant reminder that we stood on the edge of disaster.

The phoney war was not the only thing that gave one a curious sense of unreality. The Communist Party, which had shared to the full our hatred of fascism, quit the field on orders from the high command in Paris. With the exception of Yugoslavia, the order was obeyed by every communist party in Europe. Tito at least knew his enemy and took to the woods with his Partisans.

Before Christmas we were to be faced with another dilemma. In November, the Soviet Union at first threatened, then attacked Finland. Sympathy for this small country was widespread in England, but the suggestion of sending arms and aircraft, even an Anglo-French expeditionary force, came to nothing. There had been plenty of fine words—'all aid to Finland'—and at one time it even looked as if the Government was ready to take action. This would inevitably have meant war with Russia, but Norway and Sweden would not give permission for our forces to cross their territories, so the decision was taken out of our hands. Naturally the Communist Party supported Russia, although on what realistic grounds it was hard to imagine. I found it very sad that my old friend and colleague in Sunderland, Johnny Pritt, took the same line and with great passion defended Russia at the Labour Party Conference. But he was expelled, which I deeply regretted, although I did not agree with him. In argument I found my reasons for disagreement were different from those of people like Hugh Dalton, who thought it would be sheer lunacy to court war with Russia. I felt this was a moment for keeping our powder dry, although the emotional response of nearly everyone in the Party overrode expediency. It wasn't a case of war with Russia now, but, as I saw it, of finding an ally in Russia in the days to come, as we surely should. In spite of the curious pact between Germany and Russia, and that both countries were dictatorships, their philosophies were fundamentally opposed. Sooner or later one country would attack its present ally. That could be our day.

Month after month the phoney war went on. We could not understand why nothing was happening. Evacuation, which had been carried out with so much care and devotion, was undone

as we saw mothers bringing their children back to the vulnerable cities. We had no knowledge of what Hitler had in store for us and the Government's bed-time stories, sent out through the Ministry of Information, had truly lulled the nation to sleep. Even when Hitler invaded Scandinavia, there were many who asserted he had made a grave mistake, had over-stretched his lines of communication.

But first Trondheim, then Narvik startled us wide awake. Hitler's tanks sweeping through the Ardennes, treating the Maginot line with contempt, bred in us an equal contempt for a Government which had tried to carry into a catastrophic war the policy of appeasement which had preceded it.

In the meantime I was engaged in a little personal war of my own. Immediately after Munich I had joined the London Ambulance Service. I had experience of driving all kinds of trucks and lorries and felt that when things began to happen, this would be the most useful contribution I could make to the war effort. The vehicles of my section were parked under the railway arches in Bethnal Green and whenever I could get up early enough, I would take a little practice spin before going to the office. Our ambulances were a Harlequinade, certainly not born to be ambulances, and, whilst comfortable enough inside, still bore on their exteriors the marks of their original purposes. My own was a 'Beauty Rest' conveyance and was decorated with a lovely creature clad in diaphanous garments and springing from her Beauty Rest mattress like Ariadne from the foam. In the early hours of the morning, I enjoyed much good-natured banter from chaps on their way to work as I steered my chariot carefully along the Commercial Road. I tried to keep out of my mind what I might be doing with it in the black-out of a winter night—but that was not to be.

Setting a good example in the matter of evacuation, the N.U.T. had bought a hideous mansion in Gloucestershire to which they proposed transferring most of the staff when war broke out. Everything was ready and on that morning when Will and I listened in a Dover pub to Chamberlain's Declaration of War, the last typewriter, desk, file and clerk had already been transported. Men who had joined the Forces were given leave of absence on full pay.

Evacuation Surveys and the Second Front

HOW THANKFUL I felt that I was not condemned to life in a Gloucestershire village. But I was thankful too soon. When a telegram from the General Secretary demanded my presence at Toddington Manor, I realised that I had again made one of my perpetual mistakes. I could have gone into the Army Education Corps with a commission, but I had turned down the offer, because I thought my driving experience would be more useful. Now, nothing was happening in London—all we were doing was practising to drive in the black-out—and my salary had stopped. A few incendiaries on the Cavendish, and Will was transported to Canada with a unit of the Division of Scientific and Industrial Research. My financial position was insecure, so I resigned from the Ambulance Service and with my tail between my legs drove down to Toddington Manor. But I was not to stay there for long.

My brief was to visit every area from which children were supposed to have been evacuated and every area to which they had been sent, and make a survey of what I found. When possible I was to liaison between the staff at Toddington Manor and the remnant still at Hamilton House. I therefore had a roving commission to travel all over war-time England. There were no signposts, no cheerful lights from cottage windows, and to ask for directions was to court the inevitable reply, "Sorry, I'm a stranger hereabouts myself;" there was such an overwhelming terror of spies.

But in spite of all the drawbacks, the work with the children was a joy: I never could resist cuddling a tiny child. I got lice in my hair and longed for the rough ministrations of Emma once more; I got scabies between my fingers and Santo Jeger cured me with some barbarous method which took all the skin off my hand; I listened to grumbles which I tried to smooth out and praises which were music in my ears. Many alarmist stories

were written at that time about the disgusting habits of some town children and many perhaps were true, but above all and glorifying all was the infinite patience of the reception officers responsible for fitting evacuee children into strange homes, and the wonderful kindness of those who received the children. Not enough praise has ever been given to my colleagues who accompanied their children. From comfortable flats and homes they often found themselves in the most primitive conditions. "The loo in my cottage is at the bottom of a long garden," complained one elderly lady. "It's always raining. You don your gum boots, mackintosh, take your umbrella." Poor old dear, but every evening she set out with her wet weather paraphernalia to visit any child who had been absent from school, in case anything was wrong. Others so enjoyed the little country schools, the possibility of experiment, that when evacuation ended they opted to stay in their country schools.

Where there was so much goodwill, it is perhaps unfair to single out areas for special praise. But what is it about miners and mining families that generates so much warmth and understanding? In the mining villages of South Wales and of Durham, I found such happy children. They were not only welcomed, but became one with the families that sheltered them.

There was some amusement too, as on the day I arrived in a village wrongly marked on my list and saw to my amazement that every woman, walking in groups of twos and threes, was pregnant—and not a man in sight! Immaculate conception or an American camp hidden away somewhere?

I paid a memorable visit to Sheffield. A short time previously I had met Mr Alexander (now Sir William) in Margate, where he gave me an account of the perfect evacuation of Margate children from that danger zone. Soon after our talk, he had become Director of Education for Sheffield and met with an unbelievable situation. All schools had been closed and there were no plans for evacuation. The children were running wild in the streets. It needed all the considerable resource and imagination of the new Director to evolve ordered discipline out of this chaos. In little groups Mr Alexander arranged for Sheffield children to be gathered in small front parlours of houses all over the city. Each group was in charge of a teacher and school work continued as usual. I visited some of these groups and always found them happily and busily employed.

'Housey-Housey', the children called it. When the terrible bombing of Sheffield began, the great value of the scheme was at once apparent. The children were under control and it was possible to carry out a planned evacuation.

On another occasion, I had just returned to Toddingdon when I found a telegram awaiting me to go to Anglesey at once and investigate a complaint of an urgent nature. It was an unpleasant journey, especially when I reached Anglesey. It took me hours to find the house and I could not understand a word anyone spoke. Whenever I had heard Welsh spoken in the valleys of the south, it had sounded musical, soft on the tongue. Not now! At last I found an old mansion where a young teacher had been sent with her class from one of the great cities of the north. I do not mention the city, because I think it was a bad bit of planning to send a city girl to such a remote area. She had no one to talk to except children, and no books. I stayed with her for the week-end enjoying the delicious country food cooked most beautifully by the Welsh-speaking housekeeper. The best I could promise was that I would try to find another teacher or an educated person who wanted to be evacuated and would return as soon as possible, loaded with paperbacks. Both promises I was eventually able to keep.

As evacuation began to settle down, I went more often to London. The 1944 Education Bill was being framed, and I had my contribution to make to those parts of it for which I had been responsible in the Education Department.

One very great pleasure I had from those visits to Town. I would start off very early from Toddingdon, eat my lunch high on the Cotswolds and be in the National Gallery in time for the mid-day concert. What joy these concerts brought to Londoners in those grim days. Crowded together we would feel a great bond of fellowship as the music lifted us above the anxieties of our daily lives and nightly terrors. Like all London, my flat in Red Lion Square took heavy punishment, and trying to escape down a fast disappearing staircase, I received a knee injury from which I have never completely recovered. Thereafter I went to live with friends in Bishop's Avenue and joined the Wardens' post. We learned to use stirrup pumps and run about with buckets of sand, and we did put out a few incendiaries. We didn't have much effect on the course of the war, but the post was good fun and I made one friend, Barney Janner

(now Sir Barnett), whom I was to meet later in quite other circumstances.

Looking back, I know that fear of the bombs was nothing compared with the frustration and anxiety we felt about the way the war was going and the complete ineptitude of the Government led by Chamberlain. How often in those days I regretted my defeat in Sunderland in 1935.

The result of the division forced by Labour, which threw out Chamberlain and gave us at long last a national leader and an hour of deliverance, was a relief almost as great as a victory in the field. The Coalition Government was not all we may have wished for. It contained too many legacies from the past; too many 'guilty men'. But the pressure of events was so great that we had neither time nor inclination to bother about politicians for the moment.

One voice upheld and maintained us in our hour of supreme peril: for many of us trust was the greater because we had fought with Churchill for years, often against our own Party, to make a lethargic nation understand the menace of fascism. 'Premature Anti-fascists' was what our own Foreign Office and M.I.5 called us, because we wanted to arm our nation against that monstrous threat. Still there were lively times in Parliament, where Churchill was not the hero he became in the country. Nye Bevan for one could never forget that we owed a service to all democratic institutions and that in our obsession with the war we must not forget to guard the heritage which had been built through the struggles of those who had gone before us. He fought Morrison's intransigence against the *Daily Worker*; he fought to improve the Bill which was to remove the Household Means Test only from Old Age Pensioners, and here one could understand and sympathise with him, for no one had campaigned so long and so fearlessly against the anomalies of this hated measure.

Nye could often make me hopping mad, but I never ceased to love and admire him. He was certainly not loved and admired in the country at that time. The spring of 1941 had brought too many reverses—Greece, Libya, Crete—and many people like myself were impatient of any controversies which seemed secondary to the war effort. Invasion scares were talked of everywhere. To take a quiet Sabbath morning walk in a Cotswold

valley and not hear a single church bell only deepened our anxieties. Sometimes, sitting to rest on a stone wall, one imagined the peal of the alarm bells. So must the people of these islands have felt in the days of Napoleon's victories as they waited to see the beacons flaring on the hills.

Then suddenly all was changed. On June 22 Churchill came to the microphone, and, of those who heard him, none will ever forget his words, "We are no longer alone." I'm not sure which gave me the greater happiness, relief that we had a great new ally in the East, or relief that my intuition about the Soviet Union had proved right. I had bitter arguments with colleagues in the office whose greatest wish was that Hitler would now destroy communist Russia; who watched the heroism of the people of Petrograd with morbid curiosity, certain every day that the city would fall.

It was natural that we should begin to clamour for 'Aid to Russia' as we had once clamoured for 'Aid to Spain', and that we should demand the opening of a Second Front, impracticable as we knew such a strategy would have been at that moment. It was a natural reaction and it was shared by many more people than we imagined. Meetings and demonstrations in support of the slogan, 'Second Front Now' were being held all over the country—I even spoke at such an improbable place as Cheltenham. Indeed, I could have spent all my time addressing meetings, except that I had a new job to do which was very absorbing.

None of this growing enthusiasm moved the strategists from their firm military conviction that Russia was little more than a convenient side-show which would soon collapse. Cripps returned from a sterile period as Ambassador in Moscow, and reported that the Germans "Would go through the Russians like a hot knife through butter." What a man! How our leftists, people as intelligent as Michael Foot, were ever taken in by him, passes my comprehension. But whatever may have been the anti-Soviet prejudices in some quarters, the mass of the people had a better perspective. Nothing was more heartening than to visit a munitions factory, watch the women in their overalls and headscarves chalking up the tanks as they rolled off the assembly line: 'Another one for Joe'.

Stung into action by the attack on Pearl Harbor the United

States had at last entered the war. It would have seemed natural if popular pressure and a desire for revenge had tempted those in command of United States strategy to put all their forces into the Pacific theatre of war. But they had a more clear-sighted view of the task of the Grand Alliance. Britain, Russia and the United States must concentrate their efforts against the real enemy. This was of paramount importance, for if the war was lost in Europe, then all was lost. To those of us who had never ceased our propaganda for the opening of a second front, the advent of this mighty new protagonist who shared our views was an enormous relief—or it would have been if our own High Command had been persuaded to listen. But another theatre of war claimed their attention.

Rommel's victories in the desert and the fall of Tobruk (an immeasurable disaster for British arms with 35,000 British, Indians, and South Africans taken prisoner), the increasing violence of the U-boat attacks, and the escape of the German battle cruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* up the Channel, brought again the old feeling of dejection which we had bottled up inside ourselves for so long. It was no use saying now, as we did after the final victory, "We never once considered the possibility of defeat." Of course we did, again and again. Then would come a gleam of hope, such as when Molotov returned from Washington with the declaration that the task of creating a second front in Europe in 1942 was urgent.

Churchill still persisted in calling North Africa the real second front. But how did desert victories relieve Russia, who continued her Homeric stand in Stalingrad; what if that city should fall and Russia be driven back to the Urals and beyond? This horrifying possibility was stressed at all our Second Front demos. And now the Japanese were sweeping all before them: by 1942, they had conquered most of what had been our Far Eastern Empire, and Singapore had fallen. What if they should reach the borders of India?

We carried on our campaign up and down the country, and we had the country behind us. This was demonstrated by Tom Driberg's spectacular victory at Maldon where, standing as an Independent, he threw out the Coalition candidate. There were censure debates in the Commons and, at Second Front meetings, there was often not only a demand for a second front, but for a change of Government as well. Although I could not support

Nye Bevan's vitriolic attacks on the Prime Minister, I knew that, in respect of Churchill's obstinacy over the second front, there was some justification for them. Even when Montgomery launched his great offensive against Alamein, and the conquest of North Africa became a certainty, he still displayed the courage of his convictions. To the jeers of his bitter enemies in the House, he replied with sweet reasonableness, "The Government can keep on confounding me with their victories and I shall be delighted if they can beat me with such sweet chastisement."

Churchill once said, "I had many crosses to bear during the war, but the greatest of them all was the Cross of Lorraine." Be that as it may, most people in this country had the greatest admiration for the General's Free French and the members of the Resistance movement, stories of which filtered through to us. For Marshal Pétain's Vichy regime, we had supreme contempt. There was deep resentment when Darlan, Pétain's Minister of Marines, was given full authority over French affairs in North Africa, from which de Gaulle was excluded.

Darlan was shot by a young resistance hero on Christmas Eve; but it should not be thought that the storm of protest which the whole incident aroused was a left-wing arrow aimed at Churchill. What I felt was shared by many people in England. And indeed how many of the mistakes made at this period of the war led to bad feelings which have persisted to this day? Is it coincidence that we agreed to de Gaulle's exclusion from North Africa, and, while he was President, he fought against our inclusion in Europe?

How one's feelings soared and fell in those days. At one moment full of admiration for the conduct of the war; the next full of anger at some incredible act of folly. There was so much that bred distrust among even the most patriotic of us. Churchill's blindness to the revolutionary fervour that had made the fall of Mussolini possible and had thrown all Northern Italy on to our side. The great strikes that swept Turin, Milan and other cities of the North, seemed to have no effect upon him. They were not turned to our benefit and the possibility of the swift surrender of Italy. His support of King Victor

Emmanuel and Badoglio drove one to the conclusion that what Churchill feared most of all was a communist revolution in any country in Europe.

Yet there were other times, as in the case of Yugoslavia, when, if he could be persuaded he was backing the wrong horse, his help could be swift and generous. I suppose the truth is that some of us were not as objective as we should have been. Leafing through old yellowing copies of left-wing weeklies, which I have kept until now in case I might some day be tempted to relate how I felt in the war years, it is possible I was more influenced by the papers I read so eagerly week by week than by my own unbiased judgment.

During 1943 the commitment given to Molotov still seemed to be as far off as ever. Indeed at the very height of the battle for Stalingrad, the supplies, promised for delivery to Russia by the Arctic route, were stopped. Perhaps one need not have been over-anxious for that never-defeated country nor have underestimated her powers of resistance. The crushing defeat of the German hordes at Stalingrad; Russia's scorched earth policy; the sacrifice of her cherished Dneiper Dam; the battle of Kiev (when Hitler was forced to rush divisions from Italy)—and then Russia was rolling back the German army. We waited with breathless excitement for news from the Eastern Front. One of my most vivid remembrances of the war was standing with an excited queue of thousands of Londoners, to see the sword of Stalingrad.

But deep as was my admiration for the Soviet Union, I was not blind to some of her mistakes. Her treatment of Poland and her betrayal of the heroic victims of the Warsaw Rising stuck in my throat. The Poles were the darlings of England at that time. Their charm and their courage in the air, their general gaiety and élan, made many a girl's heart beat faster. The story that a memorial was to be raised in Scotland in memory of the Scots lassies who had fallen by the Poles had more than a grain of truth in it.

Now the battles began in France, and at the same time the secret preparations for the landings, which would lead to our climax of victory. Then there was the amazing crisis in Greece which seemed to shatter the Anglo-Greek friendship built up after our liberation of that country. It all kept us glued to our radio

sets, though we could only guess at much that was going on.

Meanwhile we endured the flying bombs and the few V2's. One had a feeling that the end was drawing near when we heard heartening rumours of landings in France, victorious Russians marching on Berlin, people freed from the horrors of Belsen and Auschwitz, and Hitler dead in his bunker. At last V.E. day had arrived.

We did not guess that looming over us was another horror to be unleashed on V.J. day. We certainly did not understand the humiliation suffered by the Russians from whom the successful manufacture of the atom bomb had been kept secret; nor that this would be at the root of long years of unhappiness and distrust—the 'Cold War'—and that it would lead eventually to a terrifying competition between the two super powers in the invention and manufacture of bigger and better bombs. Still less could we predict the pretentious fictions of space travel as men probe to find a means of setting up arsenals in the skies. Whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad.

I was now living in London, although not much of my time was spent there. I had recently been made Head of our Organisation Department—it was quite a new departure in the N.U.T. to give a woman a senior post. The position was an administrative one that involved quite a lot of travelling, a lot of hard work and much responsibility.

Anyone who will take the trouble to read the history of education in this country will wonder how the system has managed to survive. Schools started on a charitable basis, voluntary schools, provided schools, non-provided schools, maintained schools, grammar schools, direct grant schools, public schools and now comprehensive schools. The chaos created by the introduction of comprehensive schools is typical of the good old British way of 'muddling through', in the persistent hope that things will sort themselves out in the end.

The 1944 Education Act made an heroic effort to clarify at least some of these inconsistencies. The more important administrative changes that were made affected the shape of many of our Local and County Associations. The Part III Authorities, among which were some of the most educationally advanced authorities in the country, were abolished. Although

in some ways this was a matter for regret, it was inevitable, for all secondary education was in future the concern of County Councils and County Boroughs. The Counties were divided into divisional areas, and since our Associations had to be co-terminous with the Authority administering them, this meant a lot of shuffling around, with considerable annoyance on the part of our members. Colleagues who had worked together for years in the same Association now found themselves in different Associations; men and women, who had held office for years, now found themselves compulsorily transferred to Associations which already had their own officers. This may not seem very serious, but to be an officer in a local or county Association carries with it privileges and responsibilities—attendance at Conference, direct contact with the local authority, and in some cases membership of the education committee. I travelled up and down the country, trying to help in some of these realignments and to soothe the ruffled feelings.

I had had enough of the car. I seemed to have travelled a million miles in it since the war started. In days of peace I had changed my car every year, so I was not used to everything going wrong under the bonnet, or to garages that did not know me, and fitted reconditioned spare parts that went wrong again ten miles up the road. But travelling by train, even first class, was no joy-ride in war-time England. Over-crowded, cold, the trains were packed with tired Tommies and their kit-bags. There was nothing to eat and it was impossible to move along corridors. So I was glad when a much more pleasant part of my work, also arising out of the new Act, came to hand.

Some areas of England were much pleasanter to live in and teach in than others; districts which had suffered from few bombs, or in which because they had no munitions factories, it was much easier to find digs. The result was the L.E.A.s in the other areas, those of special difficulty, found themselves desperately short of staff. Everything else was rationed—so why not teachers? The Ministry consulted the Union, for this was direction of labour with a vengeance, but there was justice in the case the Ministry presented to us, and equity for our members. So the Teachers' Registry was set up and Sir Percival Sharp and I became its joint secretaries. Although all the work was done in my office, I was very careful to consult Sir Percival on any point concerning the Local Authorities, moreover he always took me

out for a very nice lunch, something worthwhile for anyone living alone in a flat with one ration card.

Every L.E.A. had its ration of teachers and every teacher leaving Training College or University Training Department, had full information about these allocations. With L.E.A.s clamouring for more teachers than they were entitled to, and students unwilling to apply for posts in certain areas, the work at first resembled a jig-saw puzzle. Our poor telephonist spent all the hours of the day trying to get through to L.E.A. offices and secretaries of Training Colleges, and even parents who resented their daughters being unable to obtain posts except through us. But with the efficient help of Miss Frost and Miss Robins, the two clerks from my department delegated to help with this work, we at last reduced the chaos to smooth-running efficiency. These girls were worth their weight in gold, although it is true one was over-heard to say: "She's an absolute slave driver," but hastily to add as an after-thought, "but she drives herself, so you can't complain."

One interesting development arose out of our rationing scheme. Wales had always produced more teachers than any comparable area in the country. They are a clannish lot, the Welsh, so we had no difficulty in persuading them to go in bunches to L.C.C. housing estates, which were not to everyone's fancy. After the war, I would often go to a Local Association meeting in a place like Dagenham and swear I was in the Rhondda: the same names over and over again; the same lilting voices—one almost expected the minutes to be read in Welsh, a reminder of home sweet home.

I had thoroughly enjoyed my work as head of Organisation and had supposed it would last until my retirement. But it didn't.

PART TWO

I

He Smelleth the Battle from Afar

I WAS RETURNING to London early in 1945 from a weekend in Cambridge and just outside Newport I picked up a young soldier, hitch-hiking back to his camp. His conversation was intelligent and perceptive and soon turned to Churchill and his role in our victory. Whatever doubts one might have had about the strategy of the High Command, and this young soldier had plenty, there was a deep sense of gratitude for the way in which Churchill had sustained our courage and fortified our hope even in the darkest hours.

Presently we were passing through the pleasant little town of Epping. "In a week or two," I remarked, "if you happen to pass through this place again, you will see the great man's bland smile beaming down on you from every hoarding and every window for miles around." If anyone had told me that it would be my election bills and not Churchill's, plastering the hoardings of Epping, I should have thought they were joking. But they would have been right and this is how it happened.

My favourite book in the Old Testament is the Book of Job and therein is a glorious picture of an old war horse. I have always imagined him as he paweth in the valley and saith among the trumpets :

Ha, Ha; and he smelleth the battle afar off,
The thunder of the captains and the shouting.

Well I was that old war horse! I smelt the battle from afar off, and I couldn't keep out of it. As the excitement of the General Election began to stir in the air, so restlessness and excitement began to stir in my blood. I had no real desire to go back to the House—but I felt I must get into the fight. I had a job of great responsibility with the Union, which I enjoyed, and a feeling that I might disappoint Executive Members who

had backed me against the wishes of the General Secretary if I suddenly disappeared from the scene. It was exactly the same feeling I had had when I gave up my Open Air School: that the Education Committee who had been so good to me would be disappointed. Was I about to embark once more on one of my famous blunders? He needs must whom the devil drives.

I went to Transport House. "I want a fight," I said, "a constituency where there's not much likelihood of winning, but where I won't look a fool and lose my deposit. I've no money to offer. I'm not an official candidate of my Union—but it's just a moment when I can't be a mere looker-on. I'll fight my damndest and promise to lower any Tory majority you like to suggest."

Shepherd (now Lord Shepherd), the National Agent, was highly amused. "First time I've had such an extraordinary proposition made to me," he said, "but I believe I've just the constituency to fit your bill. We've been asked to make a recommendation from List B for Epping."

I stared at him aghast: "Fight Churchill," I croaked. "Not on your life."

"Don't be silly," he replied. "I don't expect Churchill will get a walkover, but we shan't put anyone up against him." Then with a sly grin, "Certainly not a woman. The position is this: he boundaries of the old constituency have been changed; geographically the Epping Division is large and awkward, with the Forest right in the middle of it. It stretches from the borders of Hertfordshire in the East, to the edge of Walthamstow; there are two little towns, Epping and Harlow; an extra-met U.D.C., Chingford, soon to be incorporated and a large number of pleasant little villages. If you know anyone who can get you an invitation, that might be a good thing and we will back you. You know the form. They're making a short list now and the selection conference is on Saturday week."

I seemed to have hedged my bets very comfortably. The Churchill aura would still hang over the Epping Division; but Churchill himself would be well out of the way, in the much more easily worked part of the old division, Wanstead and Woodford. Also I gathered that there were a few pockets of Labour support in Chingford and Harlow, where a number of evacuees from the East End of London had taken refuge from the bombs.

Fortunately, I had one contact in Chingford. The Union's accountant, Percy Powell, was a good friend and a member of Chingford U.D.C. True he was a Tory, but he was also a Catholic and knew my interest in the Non-provided Schools problem. I saw him the next day. He was sure that there would be no difficulty as so many people remembered the meeting in Chingford, during the recent education campaign, at which I had spoken. He proved right: I received a note from the Agent inviting me to a Selection Conference if I was willing to offer myself as a Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for the Division.

There were three candidates at the Selection Conference: one was a wash-out; one offered to pay all his election expenses, if selected; I said I could offer no financial assistance at all, and that was why I was selected—a reversal of all my previous experiences!

It was a three-cornered contest, with a friendly local Liberal, a bad-tempered Tory (whose former seat would not re-nominate him, but who had been assured by his Central Office that Epping was a snip) and myself. My meetings in Harlow, among the many evacuees, were crowded and enthusiastic; Friday Hill, the L.C.C. Estate in Chingford, was solid in my support, but my canvass did not show that I had made much of an impact on the basic Tory majority. Yet I enjoyed every minute of the campaign, and in spite of the size of the constituency was able to make several exchanges with other Labour candidates fighting London and extra-met seats. It is almost impossible to get national speakers for General Election meetings, they are all too busy defending their own seats, but exchanges in big cities can usually be arranged, except where candidates are terrified of leaving their constituencies at all.

As in many other constituencies, it was the soldiers' vote that decided the issue in Epping, and that was thanks to Ernie Bevin's imaginative plan for demobilisation. Fathers who had fought in the first world war remembered the fantastic muddles of demobilisation then: the endless waiting and the ensuing unemployment, with no money in their pockets to buy a new lot of civvies. They welcomed the Minister's plan of categories, a civvy suit and straight into industry. Mothers, fathers, sweet-hearts and wives wrote to their men, 'Vote Labour—or else!' I saw scores of such letters. We had to wait a month for the

'count' while the forces' vote was collected. It must have been very trying for young ambitious candidates who had come streaming in from Army, Navy and Air Force, anticipating their demobilisation in order to stand.

I was satisfied from the final canvass that I hadn't anything to worry about—I hadn't lost my deposit! The count took place in the Drill Hall at Epping, and when the constituency boxes were opened, I was well down—radiant smiles from the Tory candidate's wife. But when the soldiers' vote came to be counted, my pile crept up and up. I was well in, by a majority of over a thousand. The Tory wife burst into hysterical weeping; the Liberal wife rushed across to give me a hug and a kiss; and, as soon as the Declaration had been read to the waiting crowds, the Epping boys rushed across to the Parish Church for a peal of bells. These were days when our church bells, silent for so long, were rung on every possible occasion.

What a glorious victory it was! Five solid years at least, in which a Labour Government, independent of any other Party and in no coalition, could begin to build the Socialist Britain of which we had dreamed so long. As all the old names came over the radio, and scores of new ones, I thought of what Hugh had said so often, "We must give the young ones their chance." Well there were plenty to choose from and a good long innings which would give them the opportunity to show what stuff was in them.

A meeting of the Parliamentary Party was called for the following Saturday at Beaver Hall. An excited crowd gathered outside, there were greetings and exclamations of pleasure from old comrades, many of whom had been in the wilderness since 1931. We were to choose our leader, and there was only one name in my mind. So I was astonished when Ellen came rushing up to me, all excitement and congratulations that I was back; then, in a conspiratorial whisper, "Leah, we're going to put up Herbert for Leader. Clem won't do! You will promise your vote, won't you?" Now, I was very fond of Ellen. I knew that when she and Herbert Morrison had worked together during the blitz, they had been very close. But to challenge Clem Attlee's leadership, after his sterling work as Churchill's deputy, seemed to me a dirty bit of chicanery and I told Ellen so, adding for good measure, "I detest Morrison and in no circumstances would he ever get a vote of mine." I saw Ellen busily flitting about among



Group of Basque children at the Leah Manning Home, Theydon Bois,
August 1937

The football team at the Leah Manning Home, Theydon Bois,
December 1937



Nancy Astor's farewell party on the terrace at the House of Commons Summer 1945: all the women M.P.'s up to (but not including) the 1945 intake



the crowd, but she must have had the same answer from everyone else, for Morrison's name was never mentioned. With great acclamation we gave Clem the right to go to the King, form a Government and pick his Ministers.

Attlee's first Cabinet was unexciting. He appointed all the old hands, with one wonderful exception, for he knew nothing about the capabilities of the young men swarming the back benches. The brilliant exception was Nye Bevan as Minister of Health, who was later to be architect of the national health service. A surprise for me was the inclusion of John Strachey. I hadn't seen much of him since Left Book Club days and our joint secretaryship of the British Section of the Co-ordinating Committee against War and Fascism, but I guessed he must have moved a little to the Right.

The young ones were a great bunch and I used to amuse myself by deciding which of them I'd put in my Cabinet if I were Prime Minister. And I didn't go far wrong. My first choices were Jim Callaghan, George Brown, Harold Wilson, George Thomas, Dick Crossman and Fred Peart. Some of them have had to wait a long time before reaching the Front Bench, but in the meantime proved their worth as rebels, and one at least proved himself a highly successful poacher turned gamekeeper. Of all the new young men, Evan Durbin stood out head and shoulders above the rest—and I knew him better than I knew the others. He had everything—charm, good looks, integrity and sound economic judgment. During the election campaign we had helped one another with exchange meetings, as our constituencies were next door to each other. While he was Hugh Dalton's P.P.S. I often saw him when I went down to the Chancellor's room for a cup of tea. His death was a terrible shock. In the autumn of 1948 he was drowned off the Cornish coast. After saving first his daughter and then her young friend who were in difficulty, he was too exhausted to swim back to safety. The brilliant future we had all foreseen for Evan never came to maturity. It was curious that Hugh Gaitskell was never on my list, nor were any of his friends. I didn't find them attractive—not enough warmth or comradeship.

As for the women, we were very much run-of-the-mill, with two outstanding exceptions: Dr Edith (now Baroness) Summerskill, who was at the newly-formed Ministry of Food, and on the

Front Bench too. She had a sharp tongue and could often make an impertinent Tory look like a small boy whose mother has just given him a smart one across his backside; and Barbara Castle, a young edition of Ellen Wilkinson, but much prettier and with the good dress sense which poor old Ellen never could achieve. Naturally I popped her into my Cabinet, but certainly neither as Minister of Transport nor as Minister of Labour and Productivity, not because I thought those posts were beyond her competence, but because I never envisaged a Prime Minister who would have sufficient commonsense to give a woman such opportunities. Harold has given more chances to women to prove their ability than any other Prime Minister in history. I was invited by a distinguished Minister to be his P.P.S. After considerable thought I refused, partly for personal reasons and partly because I think a P.P.S. is the lowest form of political life in the House: it prevents one from doing a good back-bench job, and forever keeps one's tongue between one's teeth. Although I write slightly of the post of P.P.S., I am also pretty certain that, for young members with ambition, it may well prove the first step along the corridors of power. Certainly Barbara found herself a cosy little job with Stafford Cripps—well perhaps 'cosy' isn't quite the right word in that context, and I expect she found it much cosier when Harold Wilson took over the Board of Trade.

During the first session of that great Parliament, our optimism never faded. We worked hard and liked it. I found myself on two standing committees, and Willie Whiteley, our Chief Whip, invited me to become a member of the Estimates Committee, which I felt to be a great honour and one much sought after. It brought me some very interesting work and some friends on the opposite side of the House. I joined two groups—Agriculture and Foreign Affairs—and our investigations often meant a considerable amount of travelling. I represented a mainly agricultural constituency and Foreign Affairs had always been my primary interest. I wanted to be able to speak on both subjects with some expert knowledge when they were being debated. Ministers are usually available to their groups and can give them much guidance. Tom Williams, the Minister of Agriculture, was always ready to accept our invitations; Ernie Bevin never was. In fact

he regarded both us and our views with contempt. That is why we gave him quite a lot of trouble.

It didn't take long for my constituents to realise what I had meant when I said that, once elected, I represented members of all Parties and would be available to help anyone who had a problem. Letters poured in, most of the early ones being concerned with war damage, and this meant going on to another committee in the House. With my war damage and war pension cases I had almost complete success. I had soon found that the only way to such success was to follow the example of the importunate widow: never to give in and to keep pestering the Minister until he got tired of seeing me. Tom Williams once remarked at a Lea Valley Growers' Association dinner, after I had had a lot of cases concerned with them, "She's worn out the carpet of my Ministry with her continual visitations"—which is how perhaps he regarded them.

My work soon got out of hand. I could not afford a secretary and in an interview with the *News Chronicle* I said the only thing that worried me was getting behind with my correspondence. The next day I had a telephone call from a girl who said she knew me so well by repute that she would be honoured if I would let her act as my secretary. She didn't want a salary and could be at the House every evening by six o'clock. This was indeed 'manna from heaven', and at the same time I was provided with the 'quails'. I had struck up a friendship with the Assistant Sergeant at Arms. One afternoon, when I went to his office to get a gallery ticket, he asked me where I did my writing. Incredible as it may seem, he offered me a room, very tiny and away on the top floor, nevertheless a room, something far beyond the dreams of any back-bencher. Things have vastly improved since then, when we had literally nowhere. One tried writing amid a buzz of conversation in the Lady Members' Room or just sat in the corridors, letters overflowing beside one, and scribbling indecipherable answers on the envelopes.

Perhaps I found this more irritating than some of my colleagues. I had been used to a good staff who opened all my letters, found the file and the appropriate documents before I arrived at the office, and only needed a few notes to provide me with a beautifully typed, literate answer to sign. I never even expected to get anyone on the telephone myself. What I was now experiencing seemed so amateurish—a disgrace to the

Mother of Parliaments. When I had been an M.P. previously, I had not noticed these deficiencies. I had also been an official of the Union. All I had to do then was to take my correspondence to Hamilton House and it was dealt with properly. But things had changed. The General Secretary was furious at my success and promptly gave me three months' notice. This did not dismay me except for one unfortunate consequence: during the war all Union officials and the whole of the clerical staff had foregone increases in salaries; now salary scales were under revision and, as far as the five departmental heads were concerned, they had gone up with a terrific jump. But I was out of the revision, and my pension, when it should become due, would be reckoned on the last five years of my pre-war salary—which would make a very considerable difference to my income. Still one cannot have it all ways.

I shared my little office with Lucy Middleton, who did her work in the mornings. My secretary was super-efficient, and nothing was too much trouble. The reason—she was a German girl, a refugee from Nazi persecution, and her devotion to me was due to the fact that my name was on Hitler's 'Black List'. She once gave me a terrible scare. We were far, far away from the Chamber; not a sound reached us where we were working hard to finish our correspondence before the ten o'clock division bell. Suddenly, Irene put down her pencil and staring at me said, "Perhaps I ought to tell you that I have been tried and found guilty of murder. I have seen the judge put on his black cap and repeat the terrible formula."

I froze in my chair!

We were alone and far from any help. Yet it seemed impossible that this cheerful, sensible girl with blonde Gretchen braids could be a maniac. I choked back the feeling of panic and said quietly, "Tell me about it, Irene." It was one of the most tragic stories to which I have ever listened. She was an only child and lived with her mother and father, a lawyer, in Berlin. He was also a socialist and bitterly opposed to the Hitler regime. A man of courage, he made no secret of his views. One night, came the knock on the door. He was taken to a concentration camp, where he worked up to his waist in water-logged ditches, took pneumonia and died. With the help of the Friends' Relief, Irene and her mother escaped to Switzerland. Above

everything they longed for British passports and to find work in London.

In their position, with a little money, there was a simple way open to single women and girls—a marriage of convenience. Plenty of young men were willing to turn such an easy penny. A girl married legally, secured a new English name and a British passport as the wife of a British subject, and after the wedding the man obligingly disappeared and the girl could, in time, obtain a divorce on the grounds of non-consummation.

Irene came to England, secured well-paid work as a journalist, found a flat and then brought her mother over from Switzerland. They were very happy. Even when war came they felt secure during the phoney year. But after Dunkirk, their panic grew. They were certain there would be an invasion, and feared being hunted down and made to share the same fate as their father. A suicide pact seemed the only way out. When, one morning, their landlady heard no sound from her usually punctual lodgers, she went to wake them, thinking they had overslept. The mother was dead; Irene, young and strong, was deeply unconscious, but she survived to be tried for the murder of her mother. She was found guilty, condemned to death, and her sentence commuted to life imprisonment. The condemnation for murder, of survivors from a suicide pact, has long since ended.

During the war, many appeals were made to the Home Office for Irene's release and when she had served three years they were granted. She found a good post and after the General Election became my secretary. I think she was always a little restless—who would not be after such an experience? For a time she went back to Switzerland, then emigrated to Australia. Before she went I helped her to get her divorce. Now she is happily married. I sometimes hear from her and know that, at last, she feels secure.

At Work in the House

DURING OUR FIRST session, we launched our socialist programme. Although it was a time of transition—a switch-over from a wartime to a peacetime economy—we soon made our intentions clear. Hugh Dalton's first Budget was extremely popular in the country. He made large income tax cuts, raised allowances and wholly relieved from direct taxation more than 2,000,000 people. To pay for these reliefs, surtax was raised so that the richer taxpayer paid for the relief of the poorer part of the community.

A socialist budget led to nationalisation. First, the Bank of England, which caused hardly a ripple of resentment in any quarter. The relationship between the Treasury and the Bank had always been close and, to the man in the street, other things were of much greater importance: the cost of living; the improved social services promised in the Beveridge Report; when would food rationing end, and how much longer were those frustrating coupons to be used? They were counted and treasured by young people waiting to marry and furnish their homes—but how were the homes to rise from the heap of rubble left behind after Hitler's bombs?

The sudden end of 'lend-lease' came like a body blow from the U.S.A. immediately the Peace Treaty with Japan had been signed. It left us staggering with dismay and wondering if we would ever be able to keep any of our commitments with the electorate. Until Pearl Harbor forced them into the war, America's financial transactions with us had been mean beyond belief: 'Cash and Carry' for obsolete war equipment; demands that we should 'scrape the bottom of the barrel' and sell some of our most valuable assets; and now all this was crowned by a request that lend-lease contracts, even for goods in the pipe-line, should end immediately. I had been much criticised during the

election campaign for my attacks on American policy. I now began to receive apologies from those who had been most hostile. The picture of ships carrying food and clothing to war-shattered Europe being turned back on their course and unloaded in American ports of origin disgusted everyone.

But it was the colossal overseas indebtedness we had incurred in our pursuit of victory which was now endangered. The sudden end of external aid meant that we were faced with economic ruin and all our fine dreams were cast into limbo. It was 1930 over again. America always has and I suppose always will hate our welfare state programmes, whether for the relief of unemployment as in 1930, our free medical service as in 1945, or today's modest extension of those services. While the degradation of her own poor remains unrelieved, she cannot bear to see us making an effort to take the sting out of poverty.

In our country, where houses, factories, docks and transport had been made derelict, it was going to take years of patient effort to increase exports, decrease imports, cut our overseas commitments and bring our balance of trade into equilibrium. Maynard Keynes in Washington was driven further and further from his avowed aim of an interest-free loan without strings; there is little doubt that it was this exasperating, unrewarding task which brought to an untimely end the life of the most brilliant economist of our day.

Meanwhile we suffered more and more austerity. The agreement on the American loan was signed at the beginning of December, 1945, and explained at a Parliamentary Party meeting by Dalton. I voted against it in a small minority and was fully determined to go into the Lobby against. Barbara and I left the meeting together and began a long dialogue in the Lady Members' Room. We were both in a spirit of deep dejection. She left me to go and talk to Stafford Cripps (whose P.P.S. she was) at the Board of Trade. He converted her to the view that we had no option. I kept well out of Hugh's way. He had noted my vote at the Party Meeting and I didn't want to provoke an angry quarrel with him, when he was a very worried man. In the end I voted with the Party, not because I felt any less the inequity of the agreement, and of the whole of our financial transaction with the U.S.A. since V.J. Day, but because

I could not face the ignominy of going into the 'No Lobby' with sixty or seventy Tories. It was an act of moral cowardice.

In spite of the Chancellor's struggles with the economic crisis and the knowledge that our loan was draining away, our second year of power saw us moving steadily along our chosen path. The nationalisation of the coal industry was followed by the National Insurance Acts, which gave Britain the Welfare State. Then, after a terrific struggle with the doctors, Nye brought in his National Health Service Act—the greatest piece of social legislation ever to reach the statute book. How many lives that Act must have saved! When I thought of the way working-class mothers had struggled against ill-health until they dropped in their tracks, because they dared not run up a doctor's bill; of how they had died in the last extremities of cancer, because the little lump in the breast, the discharge from the cervix had been left unattended; of children dying from polio, diphtheria, or malnutrition because the doctor was called too late; of old worn-out workmen coughing out their lives from bronchitis in stuffy little bedrooms, because there were no hospital beds for them—all the sordid conditions of ill-health amongst which I had been used to working, when I was teaching—I knew that this was the best and most far-reaching piece of work we did that year.

Of course the Act wasn't perfect in every respect. I tried to get Nye to include a measure of Family Planning in it, but he convinced me that the climate of opinion was not ready. It has taken more than twenty years, and the education of the public through a vast voluntary organisation—the Family Planning Association—to bring the idea to fruition, and then through a Private Member's Bill, though with the active co-operation of an enlightened Minister of Health, The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Robinson. It is a triumph in which I have played my part.

I had another little brush with Nye over the Analgesia Bill—for it was as much as life was worth to criticise his Act. I tried with Peter Thorneycroft (now Lord Thorneycroft) to make this one small improvement in our hospital maternity wards. The Analgesia Bill was a Private Member's Bill, so I felt quite at liberty to second it for Peter. I saw no reason why mothers in maternity wards should not be entitled to painless child-birth

if they asked for it—to be quite frank, why should they be indebted to a man, and a Tory at that, when there were a dozen Labour women in the House who might have raised the matter? The only person who objected to my interest was Herbert Morrison, who hauled me before the liaison committee for aiding and abetting a Tory to criticise a Labour Act of Parliament.

Our little Bill was slaughtered in Committee, so that by the time it reached Report and Third Reading, there was nothing left but the title. But by then we had won a moral victory: Nye's warm heart had triumphed over his sensitive skin, and he had sent an administrative memorandum to all hospitals advising that analgesia should be available to all mothers who desired it in child-birth—much better than using the gas-containers as door-stoppers.

Another 1946 Act in which I had a very direct interest was the New Towns Act, brought in by Silkin (now Lord Silkin), Minister of Town and Country Planning. I served on the committee considering the Bill because the town of Harlow, with several small villages surrounding it, was a designated area and within my constituency. No one is more anxious than I am to preserve the natural beauty of village country life. But at that time, the need for housing accommodation was desperate and urgent. The bombed-out in London were living in conditions of unparalleled squalor and over-crowding, and our war-time experience had shown us the necessity for the dispersal of industry as well as of population. Surprisingly it proved a very tough fight.

Silkin had encountered a hostile demonstration from the local people when he visited Stevenage, to address a meeting for the purpose of explaining his plan. When he was told that a strong Residents' Association had been formed at Harlow, to oppose the siting of another new town there, he certainly didn't relish the idea of putting his head in the lion's mouth again. But I was not disposed to let him off. The designated area was full of evacuees from London who had no homes to which they could return—just piles of rubble and brick. The Local Labour Party worked hard to make the meeting a success, packing it with supporters and delegations from all the contributing areas. When the Minister arrived, he found a warm and welcoming audience.

But the Residents' Association in Old Harlow had not given

up the fight. They asked the Ministry for an enquiry. Very quietly our members went to work in the affected villages: agricultural workers, railwaymen, building trades operatives, shop keepers, publicans all signed a petition asking for a new town to be sited in their area. On the day of the enquiry all our members were at work; after the Residents' Association had given their evidence without any cross-examination they were surprised to see a small figure in railwayman's uniform quietly walking from the back of the hall and presenting the Inspector with a petition containing hundreds of names. All lived in the area; all wanted the new town to be sited in the designated area: the Residents' Association was out-flanked.

Now with a flourishing new town (the best of all the new towns built at that time in my biased opinion), few, if any of its residents realise how much they owe to Bill Fisher's hard loyal work and enthusiasm. And much of the early success of settling in our new neighbours, integrating them with the older residents, setting up factories, places of entertainment, good pubs, places of worship and schools must go to our first General Manager, Eric Adams. Fortunately for me he had been Town Clerk in my old constituency in Islington. We soon became fast friends and spent many hours together speaking at meetings to explain how the town would grow, and the plans for the future.

Although most Tories accepted the principle of New Towns and voted in favour of the Bill, there were a few backwoodsmen who opposed it. I remember one amusing incident which occurred during the Second Reading. Lord Hinchinbrooke (as he was then) had spoken, in my view, contemptuously about the people who would be going to live in the new towns. I followed him and this is part of what I said:

I will tell the Noble Lord what this Bill will do when it becomes law. It will place in the hands of simple, honest, decent folk a key, opening to them a design for gracious living, which he and his class have enjoyed for generations, but the classes to which he referred have never enjoyed.

At this point the Noble Lord rose to leave the Chamber, an unusual discourtesy since, by tradition, one waits for at least two speeches in reply to one's own. He hadn't moved half-way

along the bench where he was sitting, before I called out, rather peremptorily, "Here, come back. I haven't finished with you." He came back meek as a lamb and sat down to the delighted laughter of Members on both sides of the House. I do not think he was resentful. The next morning he stopped me in the Lobby and asked, "What have you got against me?" But quickly he added, "My wife says I deserved it."

"Yesterday it was coal," Hugh Dalton began in moving the Second Reading of the Cable and Wireless Bill. "Today it is Cables. The Socialist advance continues." And we went swinging through the Lobbies, singing *The Red Flag* and Welsh hymns. The Tories thought this sacrilegious, but in 1946 we were in high spirits. Perhaps it was a good thing. It armoured us against the days of anxiety to come.

But before those days, there were other highlights—one of the greatest interest for me was Tom Williams' Agriculture Act, which continued on a permanent basis the war-time arrangements for guaranteed prices and markets. Tom was the greatest Minister of Agriculture I have known. Farmers and farm workers alike benefited from his sagacity. His encouragement to grow more food had economic reality behind it. In our long struggle against the dwindling dollars, the maximum production of home-grown food was essential.

I was a member of the Agriculture Committee and supported Tom in Committee and through all the stages of the Bill. I had much to say on how to make the life of the countryside attractive with better houses, better schools and better transport; these were the conditions I tried to secure for the many small villages in my rural constituency, while I had the honour to represent its country folk.

But farmers are queer people. In spite of the many advantages Labour's agricultural policy brought them, and my own constant support, I received greater hostility and more downright rudeness from farmers than from any other section of the community. One childish trick in which they constantly indulged was to follow me from meeting to meeting—not to hear what I had to say, oh no!—merely to interrupt and ask foolish irrelevant questions. In order to cover my widely-spread area, I always tried to do three meetings in one evening when I was working on a campaign during the recess. On my arrival at the

first meeting, they would be cosily ensconced in the front row ready for the fray. As soon as it looked as if the meeting was drawing to a close, out they would troop, leap into their cars, and when I arrived at meeting number two there they were again in the front row, ready to repeat their tactics, and so on through the evening. I got so bored with them that I once asked an abashed young farmer: "Does your wife know of the fatal fascination I exert over you?" At least that one disappeared from the scene. But I like intelligent heckling, it gives me a good chance to brighten up a meeting.

One thing I never forgave those farmers was when some of them, with other hoodlums in the district, burnt me in effigy, in the yard of a well-known hostelry in Epping Town, on the night of my defeat.

From this general condemnation of farmers in my constituency, I must exclude the Lea Valley Growers' Association. When I was defeated I received a most kind letter from the secretary, thanking me for the "prompt and enthusiastic help" I had always given when any point had cropped up, upon which they had needed my assistance, and continuing: "We have lost a very good friend in the House." Certainly that was a little sugar to coat the pill.

In his second Budget, Hugh introduced the National Land Fund Bill. This was not a new socialist measure, but a revival of Lloyd George's ideas of thirty-seven years earlier; it proposed that, when the Executors and Inland Revenue agree, death duties might be paid by the handing over of land instead of cash. As the Chancellor had in mind the creation of National Parks, and help for non-profit-making bodies like the National Trust and the Youth Hostels Association, it gave him the opportunity of exercising his own love of the countryside. I shall not be alone in remembering the speech he made at this time, which showed the more endearing side of his personality. Another memorable speech was when he introduced the Bill to end the perpetual pension paid to successive holders of the title of Lord Nelson.

Rhetoric and fine phrases are nowadays somewhat despised in the House of Commons. Few can allow themselves to be carried away without feeling rather abashed. There were some snide remarks about the Chancellor letting down his hair on

the occasion of the National Land Fund Bill. But this time, when he took us to the cockpit of the *Victory*, where the great national hero was breathing his last, he became quite emotional about the slight to Lady Hamilton, saying that Nelson "had to ask his country with his dying breath, to care for his friend, as he had no money to give her. But she was allowed to starve by a grateful country, and she found a pauper's grave in a foreign country." The whole House shared his emotion and I heard no criticism.

Had there been nothing else to make the Attlee Government of outstanding historic importance, the Independence of India Bill would have set the seal of greatness upon it. After all the suffering of the Indian people, the imprisonment of their leaders, the sterile conferences and incoherent, disputing voices at round tables, Attlee took the bold line of announcing that the Government had made an unalterable decision to hand over power to one or more Indian Governments not later than June 1948. I rejoiced that after so many years of working and hoping for the independence of the great sub-continent I was a member of the House on that occasion.

Attlee introduced the Bill in the spring of 1947. I was disappointed that the insistence of the Muslim League made partition inevitable. Partition is always a disadvantage to a country—Ireland is an outstanding example. It was said at the time that Churchill had stiffened Jinnah's resolve to insist on partition. While the Bill passed through the House without a division, its passage into law was accompanied in the sub-continent by terrible massacres due to religious animosities and disputes over the details of partition—a running sore which does not heal.

For the time being we had come to the end of our series of successes. The coal crisis struck like lightning on an unsuspecting crowd of innocents. Shinwell seemed to have made some terrible miscalculations about our stocks of coal and trucks to move them. Cuts in electricity to industry led to a jump in unemployment from 397,000 (or $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent of the insured population) to a peak of 2,300,000 (or $15\frac{1}{2}$ per cent); there were also cuts in domestic consumption from 9-12 in the morning and between 2 and 4 in the afternoon. To add to our general misery, the

weather was hellish—fog, frost, snow, day after day for three weeks, and our popularity at zero along with the Arctic weather.

These were still the days of food rationing, clothes rationing, coupons for utility this and utility that; and endless queues for everything. How could a Government be loved in such circumstances? I found my constituency meetings very difficult, but we always managed to get a good audience. Perhaps people thought the only way to get warm was to roast the Member and then have a cup of tea provided by the Women's Section.

This was all disconcerting enough but the real crisis was the long-continuing one of the balance of payments and the dwindling dollars. Again I listened to all the old arguments of 1930; today I hear echoes of 1930 and 1947 in the turmoil of 1969. Are we never to be free of this intolerable burden? Hopefully I think, perhaps at last we have a Government which will find the answer, if only the nation will be patient—play along with it and back up its endeavours.

The fight was beginning to tell on the Chancellor. "I think I shall resign," he said gruffly to me one day. But I knew he did not mean it; there was too much at stake, too many distracting voices in the Cabinet, especially on the question of cuts in our forces, vital if we were to find the necessary man-power for increased productivity—then as now our only means of salvation.

Yet it was just this very crisis which forced the United States to come out of its dream world and wake up to some of the harsh realities of life; its belief that war-shattered Britain could carry all the burdens of Europe on her tired shoulders whilst Americans rested secure in the knowledge that they had the bomb, should anything go wrong.

It was we who dropped the bomb in the form of two short telegrams: one to our Ambassador in Greece, telling him that if the Greeks wanted an army after March 31 they must provide it themselves, and one to Washington saying that after March 31 there would be no more money for Greece. It seems to have been quite a traumatic experience for our American friends, and woke them from their Mitty-like dream of a world in which they would have no commitments to anyone—except the responsibility of telling this effete country just where we got off, that we were suffering from 'creeping socialism', and pressurising us to

change our socialist policies, exactly as in 1930 they had interfered with us on the question of unemployment benefit. They even made the impudent suggestion that we should form a coalition government. We, in the House, found these interferences in our domestic affairs intolerable.

The date of convertibility, when we were pledged as part of the loan agreement to make sterling freely convertible for all current transactions, was in July. It became more and more certain as the days sped by that we should never be able to hold it; that we should have to suspend convertibility. After six weeks it was called off. There were agreements for making two, perhaps three more drawings on the loan. What then? The anxiety of every member was acute. At mid-day of August 20, it became known that Hugh would broadcast to the nation after the news that evening. This was supposed to be 'top secret' but I knew about it and it gave me the chance to cancel the meeting I was to have held in the village of Royden and tell my constituents to listen to the Chancellor's broadcast instead. It was a rushed job that I was very pleased to have done. My friends Kitty and Leonard Clare lived in the village. I went there to dine and we listened to the broadcast together. Somehow it didn't sound like Hugh's voice; still less like Hugh when he ended his broadcast with the words, "Goodnight. God bless you everyone."

We went across to the local to find out people's reaction. To me the whole affair, from the very acceptance of the terms of the loan to the suspension of convertibility, had been a series of humiliations. Here in the little village pub was a spirit of defiance, best expressed by a supporter who shouted to loud cheers, "Bugger the Yanks!" I wondered if they realised all that it meant. I emptied my purse across the counter and ordered drinks and fags all round. "The last of the fags, boys," I said. That was certainly one dollar-import we could do without.

One had hoped that the Chancellor's fourth Budget, with its simple aim of fighting off inflation without harming social advance, would begin to put us on the road to recovery. On Hugh's own personal destiny it was to have a devastating effect. The story is well-known. On his way to the Chamber, he had stopped for a short chat with one of the Lobby Correspondents. He was an old friend and Hugh thought a friendly tip about

the contents of the Budget would help him to get his ideas into shape, before phoning it across to his paper after the Budget statement had been made. Unfortunately this confidence was misunderstood. Of course it was a terrible gaffe, one which no Chancellor, let alone Hugh Dalton, could have been expected to make. The leak was in the paper before the Budget speech was concluded.

There was nothing Hugh could do but resign his office. He made no moan and, both at the Party Meeting and afterwards in the House, conducted himself with the greatest dignity. At the Party Meeting he made short work of the crassly stupid theories which had been circulating—that he was tired of the Treasury and had chosen this way of getting out, and that there had been serious differences and antagonisms between himself and Cripps. Well, as he said, there are certainly easier ways of leaving high office than humiliating oneself; as for Cripps, although there had been much bad feeling between them some time before as a result of Cripps's egregious conduct, during the past year they had seen closely eye to eye.

He concluded by saying that after a rest he would be back in full activity. In the meantime, he had made an assignation with Leah Manning to sit beside her on the third bench below the gangway (the traditional seat from which apologies, explanations and resignations are made)—“she and I were boy and girl together more than twenty-five years ago in this Movement; both rabble rousers at Cambridge.” As one Member remarked on leaving the meeting, “We went expecting a *Miserere* and we heard a *Te Deum*.”

In the events which followed, there were more signs of sympathy than of condemnation. He had created a public image of himself which was at variance with the true man. It is often said that inside every fat man there is a thin man struggling to get out. Inside Hugh Dalton, with his booming voice, bonhomie, and extrovert, ‘song in my heart’, self-confident, public face, was a much quieter man. A man easy to wound, loving beauty and simple pleasures, and deeply anxious when things were going wrong for the Party. This was particularly clear during all those anxious months when the exhaustion of our dollar credits and the suspension of convertibility sat at his side like a terrifying nightmare. They were saddening times for all of us. Indeed, the Budget indiscretion and the Chancellor's resig-

nation came almost as an anti-climax, after the mounting tension of those months.

Poor Hugh! Never glad confident morning again!

Cripps became the new Chancellor as the Marshall Plan began to emerge. This was far from the most unsordid act in history. It was not aid to an ally in economic distress, but was aid to anyone in Europe who would help to stop the spread of communism—a haunting fear in American thinking then as it is today. I was at a party at the Yugoslav Embassy on the night the plan was announced. I asked the Ambassador if his government was likely to take advantage of the offer. His answer, but in rather more diplomatic language, was equivalent to the words G.B.S. put into the mouth of Eliza Doolittle.

The day when the Agreement was to be debated in the Commons came during the week when I had been asked by the B.B.C. to make the 'Week in Westminster' broadcast. I cannot express more adequately the undercurrent of distrust which ran through the debate than by repeating the relevant parts of what I said over the air:

"The House of Commons is as temperamental as an April day and never more so than when it is strung up. Its mood changes quickly from grave to gay; from light inconsequential chatter, to deep and concentrated study of some critical problem; it can be angry and cruel, charming and friendly all in a moment. This week was no exception. Question time on Monday showed the House in all its moods. When the Minister for Civil Aviation came to the box, there were shouts of delighted amazement. Mr Lindgren has a very individual taste in ties and handkerchiefs. On this occasion, they spread across his vest like a beautiful sunset. The House showed its appreciation . . .

"Question time over, the House settled down to a hard two-day debate on European Economic Co-operation. The debate was opened by the new Chancellor of the Exchequer. Sir Stafford Cripps would have made a good school master of the old-fashioned sort. He has the same gift of lucid exposition, the same little wintry smile for the favourite pupil; the same sarcastic rebuke for the stupid or the presumptuous. And so, having ordered us to take out our books—in this case the White Paper on the Agreement—he went through it line by line until it became crystal clear to the dullest of his pupils. Indeed as

Mr Boothby plaintively remarked in the course of the debate, 'It was a relentless performance, but I think he might have given the boys credit for having done a little more homework during the week-end.'

"The Chancellor left the House in no doubt that to refuse E.R.P. is to cripple production in this country and so all chance of recovery. But the gift and the loan will not be allowed to obscure the position. He made it clear that whilst he holds his job, we shall not be allowed to live on our capital and that our reserve will remain intact at about £5,000,000,000.

"The debate which followed was at a remarkably high level, showing three clearly-defined trends—the main body of opinion which saw the need for the loan and with varying degrees accepted it with thanks, but regret; others who contributed a modicum of criticism; and devastating attacks which came from what someone called the 'Beaverbrooke-Moscow Axis': young Mr Marlow and Beverly Baxter on the right and D. N. Pritt and Platts Mills on the left—lawyers both. Naturally these gentlemen did not attack the Agreement for the same reasons, but the end result was the same—a demand for its outright rejection.

"The four men were in marked contrast to one another, D. N. Pritt and Platts Mills putting forward logical, legal cases in which they dealt with the political strings implicit in the Agreement; Mr Marlow quietly confident that a solution to our present difficulties could have been found within the Empire, if only we had put our hearts into calling an Empire Conference; and Beverly Baxter, eloquent, sincere, even moving in his plea that we should reject the proffered aid, reconstruct Europe on the one hand, buy our essential foodstuffs and raw materials from the Empire on the other—and we could still come through thanks to the character and resources of the British people and British Empire.

"I thought the two most important speeches of the debate came from David Eccles, Tory, and Ronald MacKay, Labour, who brought the House fairly and squarely up against the two real problems we have to face and which it is pure wishful thinking to overlook.

"David Eccles is an astute young politician, and it is some measure of the esteem in which he is held by his Party that he should have been chosen to open the debate on the second day. He came straight to the point when he said, 'I hope the

House will allow me to be blunt about what is expected of Western Europe. Why should we hide from ourselves the fact that the grand strategy of American aid has altered since Mr Marshall's Harvard speech. We cannot now assume that trade will steadily expand between us and the rest of Europe. Armaments must now come into the picture. We must admit that E.R.P. is no longer a plan for economic recovery in a friendly world. It has become one of several weapons in the struggle of Western civilisation for survival.'

"Here Mr Eccles laid bare one of the doubts. Ronald MacKay dealt with others. He brought us up against a sharp, hard truth. In his advocacy of Federal Union for Western Europe, which he has discussed in the House again and again, he showed us where, in his opinion, our salvation lies. He does not accept dollar shortage as a temporary phenomenon. Obscured by other factors, it existed before the war and he declared that the recovery programme, even if we have it for the full four years, will not make the position any better. Complete control over currency, over movements of population, over transport and power are necessary if Europe is to recover and this, he said, cannot be achieved by a co-ordinating committee sitting in Paris. Europe has to direct herself to an entirely different form of political and economic organisation if she is to survive.

"Winding up for the Opposition was Oliver Stanley. The youthful face and figure under the thatch of silver hair; the light, ironic voice; the delicate malice with which he adorns his speeches and his wide experience and knowledge, combine to make him one of the most attractive speakers in the House. Twitting John Platts Mills and his supporters, he asked if they really believed Russia is the only source from which we may expect to get disinterested help. 'If they do believe that,' he said, 'there has been no such example of credulity since Little Red Riding Hood.' Answering those Members who had declared that American aid was no more than payment for the tragic losses we had sustained during our indomitable struggle of war, he said, 'I believe that in offering this aid the Americans are thinking, not of the past, but of the future. They are giving us this opportunity, because they believe we have a survival potential as well as a survival value—by what we can do with it now, we can survive and our survival be of use to them and to the world.'

"Harold Wilson tried to clear up the doubts which had run like a dark thread through the whole course of the debate. Is American aid altruism or enlightened self-interest? Is it rehabilitation or is it purely military and strategic? Will it cripple our growing trade with Eastern Europe? Will it conflict with Imperial policy? Shall we at the end of four years be any better off than we are today? How much can we do in the time we are buying to redress the tragic contrasts between the wealth of the West and the poverty of Europe?"

"And so, as Members streamed into the Lobbies—409 of us Conservatives and Labour in the Aye Lobby—some still sat unhappy and perplexed on their benches, unable to reach a valid decision as to how they should cast their votes. Politicians make strange bedfellows: in our tightly packed 'Aye Lobby' were many incongruous associations. But as we rushed out between our 'Tellers', and round to the 'No Lobby', there was nothing so odd as we found there. The twelve with their supporting newspapers in an excited little group: Max Aitken with Willie Gallacher; Phil Piratin and Beverly Baxter. It was a wondrous sight."

I concluded my broadcast with these words: "After the tumult and the shouting had died away, the enigma of the Agreement still remained. The question mark which had haunted the whole debate still seemed to hang over the Chamber, as indeed it will hang over Europe long after the echoes of the debate, and of this broadcast, have been swallowed up in the ether."

I did not realise I was being prophetic and that alas we now know the answers—all of them.

The first offer of E.R.P. had been made in June 1947. We signed the agreement and payments began in 1948, and lasted four years. We were all immersed in the problems of our economic situation and whether economic experts or not tried to do our homework and understand each new difficulty as it arose. But this did not exclude other matters which occupied our interests and attention. I was a member of the External Affairs Committee, so Foreign Affairs were of outstanding interest to me. Most people regarded Ernest Bevin as a great Foreign Secretary. I found him a great disappointment. We had come out of World War II with enormous prestige, and many of us had hoped that our role was to lead the world

along the paths of peace. Instead, our growing malaise with Russia and our subservience to the U.S.A. only succeeded in furthering the polarisation of the two great powers.

It was natural that the Soviet Union, which had made such tremendous sacrifices in pursuit of victory, should have felt rebuffed at the secrecy which had surrounded the bombing of Hiroshima at the very time when she was being encouraged to make peace overtures to Japan. We had mishandled our relations with Russia since the end of the war: shown ourselves unsympathetic to her aspirations; seen only dictatorship and acted against communism with venom. Our one success had been made by Harold Wilson, through the Board of Trade; he had managed to find some rapport with his opposite number. What I found most exasperating was that Members who tried to find out for themselves what made communist countries tick, and made efforts to visit the countries of Eastern Europe, were always accused, especially in the constituencies, of being under-cover communists. Times change, and I found it amusing that my successor in the Epping Division, Mr Finlay, an ardent Tory if ever there was one, also found it a good idea to visit Russia and find out for himself.

Discontent with our foreign policy was widespread, and came to a head fairly early—indeed at the beginning of the Second Session. Dick Crossman put down an amendment to the Address. He stressed what so many of us felt: that our co-operation with the U.S.A. in an anti-Russian policy would, unless curbed, lead to a third world war. The suspicion that we were becoming more and more subservient to America was deep-rooted. I can think of only one incident in all those years when we faced up to America: it was during the Korean War. General McArthur advocated the use of the bomb and, in less than twenty-four hours, Clem Attlee was in Washington, telling the President that if the bomb was used America must alone take responsibility.

After the Crossman amendment was framed, the Prime Minister was asked to receive members of the External Affairs Committee; he suggested we should first see Hector McNeil, Bevin's Under-Secretary; if we were not satisfied we could come back to him. But we had the bit between our teeth, and sent a copy of our letter to the Prime Minister, and to the Press as well—an action for which we were severely criticised. The upshot

was that there were more than 100 abstentions at the conclusion of the debate—a massive parliamentary sit-in.

I do not like abstaining. If I feel deeply I would sooner go into the 'No Lobby', as I did on the Conscription Bill and all its amendments. If a thing is wrong in principle, it cannot be put right by amendments. The Prime Minister had dealt rather roughly with me when I spoke against the Measure at a Parliamentary Party meeting. But when he saw Muriel Nichol and me coming through the 'No Lobby' together, he shook his head sadly and said, "You I.L.P.-ers." This was a matter over which the Whips had no jurisdiction—it was a question of conscience.

The problem of the Hydrogen Bomb and its terrors was soon under debate in the House. I suppose it was on this occasion that I made the most widely-reported speech of my political career—reported not only in the Press of this country, but in most other countries as well. Sir John Anderson had been describing flash burns, radiation and the shelter problem, trying to persuade us that a few layers of brown paper were a good protection. As he went on my heart began to thump in my throat. I think Mr Speaker must have noticed my growing agitation, for immediately Sir John sat down and I sprang to my feet, he called "Mrs Manning". I had cultivated a quiet style, when speaking in the House—but not on this occasion. Indeed I was in such a rage that my voice must have carried outside the Chamber, for Members came pouring in and visitors craned over the Galleries to see what was happening.

The speech was reported in the *News Chronicle* as follows :

"This is indeed a tortured generation," she said with tears in her eyes. "Before we have built up the houses destroyed in the last war, we are beginning to think how we should build shelters to protect us in the next. Before the ink is dry, or indeed before we have even signed the Peace Treaties we are rattling our swords in our scabbards and hurling abuse at one another across the ether. It is a terrible commentary on our times, and how we can sit and listen to such things being coolly discussed, without any kind of emotion, I do not know. Maybe the men can: the women can not."

She dealt realistically with the problems of evacuation and

dispersal of industry in the event of a possible war and ended with a plea for action before it was too late.

"The iron curtain," she said, "which we are told exists between East and West, has today given way to a kind of sheet in a shadow play, across which both sides see a phantasmagoria of distorted, horrible grotesque people passing. Someone ought to tear down that sheet and show people on both sides; we are all ordinary human beings, hating war and longing for peace."

I received hundreds of letters after that speech—many from abroad—asking what women could do to stop men from their Gadarene flight towards war. One suggestion was a 'Peace Train' through Europe, and this was done, but not by women of this country. Something more practical was attempted by young people. One day a green card was brought to me in the Chamber. I went out to the Lobby and there I found my young Canadian niece, with a group of other young people, bearing a card, 'CANADA—HERE WE COME'. They were on their way to Yugoslavia, to join a labour camp, and to help tear down the shadow sheet by repairing bridges and railway lines.

My membership of the Empire Parliamentary Union gave me the opportunity of meeting many visitors from Commonwealth countries. The Secretary to the Committee often invited me to help entertain them to dinner or lunch. It also gave me a special interest in those debates which dealt with Colonial and Commonwealth affairs. I remember with special clarity two such debates, because the two outstanding speeches were made by two outstanding personalities, and I have kept the press cuttings reporting them. One of these Members was Chuter Ede, then Home Secretary, and one of the best we've ever had. The other was Walter Fletcher, Conservative Member for Bury.

Chuter Ede had for many years been a close friend and colleague (such a good friend that when I was defeated at Sunderland, he offered me his own safe seat). Beginning life as a teacher in a small Church School, he rose steadily through the various local offices of my Union, to become General Secretary of the Surrey Teachers' Association, and then one of our supported candidates. He won a famous bye-election after the First World War and later, when the 1944 Education Act was in

preparation, became Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Education. He held very decided ideas and once said to me, "Don't encourage this comprehensive school idea. Where it's sound educationally, O.K., where it's prompted by philosophical and political ideas, it's so much poppycock"—and Jimmy Ede was a very good socialist!

In the 1945 Parliament he was made Home Secretary and was very popular in the Members' tea-room, for no one could tell a funnier story with a dead-pan face nor give us so much information about the famous racing course on which the Derby is run, for he loved Epsom and had lived there all his life. But he was also shrewd and eloquent and I never heard him better than in the British Nationality Bill, which had come back to the Commons after a severe mauling in the 'other place'. Briefly, the dispute between Lords and Commons was a dispute between two opposing ideas—the Government view, that citizenship of a Dominion should become the gateway to subjecthood of Britain, and the view enshrined in the Lord's Amendment, that the status of 'British Subject' should not be dependent on local citizenship.

Chuter Ede handled a complicated case with superb skill, lighting his speech with humour, and illuminating technical legal points with apt literary and historical allusion. His peroration was moving and eloquent. He said, "It is true that we cannot admit all our backward peoples immediately, into the full rights that British subjects in this country enjoy; but by linking the United Kingdom and the Colonies, we can give these people a feeling that on the homespun dignity of man, we recognise them as fellow citizens and that our object as far as they are concerned is to hope to raise them to such a position of education and training, that through such experience, they too shall be able to share in the grant of full self-government, which this House has so generously given, during the last few years, to other places."

Jimmy Ede, as he was known to his friends, continued his love of the N.U.T. until the day of his death and with his sister always attended our Annual Conferences. He was one of the Union's most eminent sons and we felt great pride in his achievement.

Walter Fletcher's intervention in the debate, I remember so well, came on a day when the estimates for the Colonial Office



A Unity Theatre first night, with Kingsley Martin, Bessie Braddock, Leah Manning (a director), and others



The author with children from the Open Air School, Cambridge, on an outing

were under discussion. Much of the debate turned on the unhappy situation which then, as now, existed in Malaya. The Honourable Member for Bury had an intimate knowledge of the Far East, unrivalled in the House. A giant of a man, he combined the dilettantism of the eighteenth century with the paternalism of the nineteenth and the business acumen of the twentieth. He did well to warn the Government 'and all else whom it may concern' that they were only throwing dust in their own eyes, if they regarded the troubles in Malaya as a part of world-wide communism. "It is not as yet an ideological movement," he said, "it is not as yet a nationalist movement, but it is very unsafe to pretend that a nationalist movement cannot arise out of it. It is the preliminary notice, before we get the final notice 'Quit Asia'." He believed that the current outbreak of terrorism and lawlessness arose from one reason only. "The Malaysians believe," he said, "with that great sensitiveness which comes to them by way of the bush telegraph—the 'grape vine'—that crime will not be punished." On this point, Creech Jones, the Colonial Secretary, sought to reassure him.

How strange that these two debates took place more than twenty years ago, but that the problems they raised have not yet been fully resolved.

The most colourful figure in the House on that occasion was Bustamente, sitting in the Distinguished Strangers' gallery. Great Jamaican trade unionist and politician, he is immensely tall, with a mahogany, hawk-nosed face, topped by a thatch of wiry, grey hair. Every time the name of his magic island was mentioned, he would peer over the gallery rail, and his old face would light up and seem to quiver with excitement. I was fortunate in being invited to take the tea-break with him. He was immensely pleased when I told him that my paternal grandmother was born in Jamaica and that our ancestors were among the first colonists to come from France and work plantations there. I explained that her father had brought his two young daughters to England to place them in a boarding school, but had died before he could return, so the girls had stayed in England. "Then you must come back instead," he said. "Yes, come back, come back." But it is a visit I have never been able to make.

Unless a back-bencher is lucky in the ballot for Private Member's Bills, he is most unlikely to influence legislation except by

pressure in committee where he may have put down an amendment to the Bill under consideration. In the Agriculture Committee and in the Committees dealing with Penal Reform and New Towns, I was fortunate in getting my amendments carried. Apart from these amendments, I can think of only one occasion when my views prevailed—many years afterwards, when I was no longer in the House. At the time of which I am writing, the House of Lords was an all-male preserve, and peerages were hereditary. When an heir succeeded, or when a new peerage was created, he had to receive a patent, before he could take his place. There were quite a number of women who were Peers in their own right, but since they never received a patent they were unable to take their seats. I made quite a wonderful speech about this injustice, but I must confess that it was not really my own, for I was supplied with an excellent brief by an eminent lawyer. Why he picked on me, I do not know. Certainly I fought hard for the suffrage, for equal pay and to remedy certain injustices suffered by women, but I had never been outstandingly feminist. Neither I think was Queen Victoria, who was mentioned in my brief as having, alone in history, created two women peers—Baroness Burdett-Coutts (her banker), and Disraeli's perfect wife, of whom it is said she was so proud of the honour that she slept in her coronet!

My concluding remarks were a little embellishment of my own and were not contained in the brief handed to me by learned Counsel. As far as I can remember, I said something to this effect: "When a Prime Minister is seeking to enoble a member of this House, usually because he wants a safe seat for a comrade fallen by the way, one may observe him anxiously peering around for a Member without male heir, or a bachelor of such an age that even if he took a young wife to help him out, he would be unable to do anything about it. I can assure the Prime Minister that no such Honourable Member exists. Such an old gentleman would go on and on trying, for what greater incentive exists under the hereditary principle, than to secure for himself and his family a new name in Burke's.

"But if the Prime Minister would only cast his eye around among the lady members of this House, he would discover quite a few who, without disclosing their age, appear with biological certitude to be incapable of embarrassing him by producing an heir."

The Clerk at the Table reproved me afterwards, "You should not make speeches," he said, "which destroy the decorum of Mr Speaker."

When the Bill for making Life Peers was introduced, I expected my speech to have been quite forgotten, but the women to whom I had referred got their patents and took their seats in the Lords, without the necessity of any special honour being conferred upon them—they were there 'in their own right'.

Given time, I might have influenced another change. I had a great interest in the question of decentralising the fruit and vegetable market at Covent Garden, and I had succeeded in getting Hugh Dalton to take an interest, too. Nothing more ridiculous can be conceived than the practice of bringing fragile, perishable commodities from the areas in which they are grown, to be sold wholesale in the heart of London, and then returned to the place of production for resale in the shops. The cost of transport, the profit to the middle man, the loss to the grower, the profit to the shopkeeper, the damage to fresh young crops and the high price to the housewife, all add up to idiocy. Apart from the indignation this whole process aroused in me, I had a special constituency interest. Waltham Abbey, the most consistently loyal part of my division, was in the very heart of the smallholding and glass-house industry. A flourishing local market would have been of great value to a wide area of surrounding countryside. But before the matter had been settled, I had lost my seat.

I think Mr Speaker was a little bored with my constant questions and attempts to get an adjournment debate on the subject; so when, one Friday morning, I rose in my place to address the House on the question of 'Market decentralisation', I saw a look of irritation cross his face. But I immediately galvanised the attention of the House, by announcing, "Mr Speaker, Sir, at 3.30 a.m. this morning, I was in Covent Garden Market," and went on to describe the chaos and muddle I had seen there and the distances from which so much of the produce had come and to which some of it would return.

I received more publicity for this effort than for many others of far greater importance, for at that time, on the Saturday evening programmes of the B.B.C., there were two gentlemen

who used to enliven broadcasting with their laconic duets, and they chose to enshrine my early morning visit to the market in a lyrical tribute, each verse of which ended with a fervent, "Thank God for Mrs Manning!"

Given time! Well, this was not accorded me, and another chapter in my career was drawing near to its close.

III

I Retire from Politics

ALTHOUGH MY CONSTITUENCY Party had no fears about my retaining the seat at the General Election, which was now imminent, I had no such comfortable feeling. Analysing the situation, I saw three things very clearly. It was a highly marginal seat to begin with. Evacuees from the East End of London, who had worked and voted for me in 1945, had now returned home, while Tory evacuees who had fled from the Division to Devon and Cornwall were back again full of resolve to win back a seat which they felt should never have been lost. Then although housing was doing well in Harlow, and should in time make the constituency fairly safe, the new residents were not on the register and would go back to vote in the London divisions from which they had removed.

Whilst I had the confidence and affection of the rural areas (always excepting the farmers), in Chingford I could count only on the Friday Hill L.C.C. Housing estate: the rest of the town was extremely hostile. Canvassing in the narrow little streets adjacent to Walthamstow, one became aware of a phenomenon which is part of our changing society. Voters born and brought up in solid working-class Labour homes suddenly change when they buy or rent a house in what they consider a more middle-class milieu. One can only admire their anxiety to do better for their children and obtain the amenities which make their homes and lives more comfortable. But do they change their voting habits out of conviction? One would be delighted to think so. That at least would indicate that they were thinking deeply on the problems of their country. In canvassing there was no sign of any such conversion; one was driven to the conclusion that a Tory bill in the window was for them an outward and visible sign of that inward grace which had transferred them into 'middle class' respectability.

Labour's Jubilee year, 1950, opened as we prepared our Election Manifesto: 'A Declaration of Labour Policy for the Consideration of the Nation—Let us Win through Together'.

We had much to boast of. In five years of power, we had not lost a single bye-election. Labour's policy of planned economy had resulted in a higher employment level than ever before in peace time: 98 per cent of the insured population were at work. New factories were going up all the time, in what had been known as distressed areas, but were now called 'development areas'. The worst ravages of the war in housing had been overcome, and we had given the country a Welfare State and the best Health Service in the world. We had begun the good work of give Independence to our great overseas possessions. All this had been achieved in a country shattered materially and economically by five years of war.

We had a large majority and although it was natural that we should lose some seats, I do not think anyone foresaw the disaster ahead. We lost nearly ninety seats, and our majority was reduced to eight. It seemed certain we should be unable to survive for more than a few months without sustaining defeats in the House and being forced to go to the country again.

My own campaign had been discouraging in many respects. I had had to visit the United States, and during my absence the General Management Committee dismissed our Agent, although I had been paying half his salary. He was a splendid hard-working young man and, in his subsequent post, increased his Member's majority and raised enough money to begin buying new premises. I found his loss hard to forgive, for I was facing a General Election with the help only of a non-professional person.

We issued two leaflets: my Election Address, an account of my stewardship that included a message from Vernon Bartlett that mentioned my work during the Spanish Civil War; and the second leaflet which gave an account of my many positions in the Labour Party and in my Union, together with a resumé of the work I had done in the Constituency during the life of the 1945 Parliament. This was before the days when television had taken the place of election meetings. Everywhere my meetings were packed out and enthusiastic—except in Chingford. For some reason, which I have never been able to fathom, I was personally disliked, even hated, in Chingford and by the farmers of

the constituency. This was a new and chastening experience for me. Although people had often disagreed with me, I had never before met with dislike and hostility. In Chingford, although the meetings were full to overcrowding, I could not get a hearing, and at some of them, as far back as I could see, were people wearing 'vermin badges'. My voice was lost in a continuous concatenation of, "Are we vermin? No! No! No!" They were referring, of course, to Nye Bevan's unfortunate and notorious description of the Conservatives.

I cannot remember whether I felt disappointed at the result. Perhaps I had hardened myself to expect it, but the disappointment of my Party workers I found hard to bear. As I drove away from the school in Chingford where the count had taken place, with one of my most active Party workers, Mrs Councillor Woods, a disagreeable thing happened. The car window was down, so that I could wave farewell to my many supporters who had gathered in the forecourt of the school to hear the result. Two Tory women pushed their way through the crowd and spat full in my face. While I tried to wipe away the slime, Mrs Woods, almost incoherent with rage, demanded an apology, but although there were Tory Party officials present, one was not forthcoming. I drove quickly away, for I could see a nasty situation brewing, in which I did not wish to be further involved. I could only feel, regretfully, that the assumption of a middle-class crust hadn't penetrated very deep.

What was the cause of our set-back? In my own division, nationalisation, although still in its infancy, was a significant issue—coal especially, for who could forget the bleak winter months of the coal crisis, due in their minds to nationalisation? The point was raised with some truculence at every meeting. But I am sure of far greater importance, especially amongst women voters, was the feeling of frustration induced by our tight controls, and the rationing of so many commodities. Housing had not gone ahead as far as we had hoped and the sordid conditions in which so many of our people were forced to live made them bitter, wanting to hit back—and who can blame them. Gratitude for the many benefits Labour had brought was lost in a miasma of misery.

It was a black year for me. I had lost my seat, my husband and my enchanting Siamese cat Mimi—and only those who

are owned by a Siamese cat can know what that meant to me.

With the prospect of another General Election within the year, I was re-adopted as prospective parliamentary candidate for the Epping Division of Essex, and we set to work to restore the fallen fortunes of the Party. Did some optimists expect a return to power next time? It seemed to me a dead hope.

I was very depressed by the disunity within the Party, the factions among senior Ministers, and the growing Butskellism apparent in Gaitskell's first Budget. I felt that Nye had been most unfairly passed over for two senior posts, that of Foreign Secretary in particular. To make Herbert Morrison Foreign Secretary might have been laughable had it not been tragic. The crunch came in the spring, with the resignations of Nye, Harold Wilson and John Freeman. During the whole of that summer, feeling was at boiling point and found expression at the Scarborough Conference in October, when the Bevanite panel scored an outstanding success. I think my own feelings were not nearly so exasperated by teeth and spectacles and prescription charges, as by German rearmament. That, I felt, might have been a valid reason for resigning my candidature.

I was approached by two other constituency parties, with fair majorities, whose members were retiring. I consulted Sara Barker, at that time Chief Woman Officer of the Party, who was now sharing my flat. "No," she said most emphatically, "to leave Epping now would be as good as telling them they have no hope of winning Epping back next time." Well, they didn't; nor the next time, nor the next, by which time I had long since handed in my cards and returned to my first love.

It was during this time that I had a violent quarrel with Hugh Dalton. I had gone to see him, because I felt he had dealt most unfairly with a friend of mine. He was Minister of Town and Country Planning, and so covered New Towns. He had deprived her of her post, as Chairman of one of the Corporations, for a trivial reason and I wanted to beg him to reconsider his decision. For the first half hour, he tried to steer clear of the object of my visit, although I had stated it clearly in my letter. He dilated at great length on how he had played *deus ex machina*, in various recent appointments, advising Attlee that this one should be moved up the line and this one down. I grew impatient but tried not to show it, for he looked desperately ill, his skin parchment yellow and with deeply graven

lines from nose to mouth. But I couldn't waste any more time, and abruptly brought him back to the matter in hand. I was totally unprepared for his snarling attack on me. "Quite apart from recent happenings," he said, "I had intended to sack your friend anyhow. I don't approve of payment for personal favours by public appointments, and if you felt annoyed by my choice of Bertie Russell's wife, as the woman member of Harlow Corporation instead of yourself, you now know the reason why. You have shown your displeasure by completely ignoring our friendship since you lost Epping."

I was so astonished that I stared at him for a moment, then said, "Goodbye, Hugh," and quietly left the room. Hugh had received no favours from me, except a long and loyal friendship, beginning in the days nearly forty years ago, when we were 'boy and girl' together at Cambridge. But what stung me most was his assumption that I had expected to be offered a place on Harlow Corporation. Such a thought had never for an instant entered my head. Indeed, if it had been suggested, I should have turned it down for the same reason that I had resisted the pressure put on me by Harlow Party that I should stand for their one safe seat on Essex County Council. It would have given the impression that I thought the Epping Division was lost and that I was willing to accept a consolation prize.

I received a contrite letter from Hugh. He was very tired, he wrote, and that made him miserable and irritated. Also he had been wounded by my recent coldness towards him. It is true that I might have called at the House for a chat and a cup of tea, as in the old days, but I had a real reluctance to go to the House of Commons, as so many past members seemed to do, haunting the place to see if there was anything doing.

We kept up a desultory correspondence until his death, but the warmth had gone out of our friendship. This quarrel was the deciding factor in my resolve to retire from active politics, except for speaking at meetings and in the very minor role of Chairman of our village Local Party. Since a village party is the smallest unit in party organisation, I was back on square one. No! I had looked at Hugh and tried to remember him as a boy—gay, happy, sexy, yet serious. Years of responsibility had changed him into this soured, ungovernably-tempered elderly man. I would grow old of course, but I did not want to change

my temperament, to become humourless, lacking in compassion, and ill-tempered.

My decision to retire caused surprise and much disappointment in the Division, but it was not made a matter for moan. The Women's Section arranged a jolly little supper party and presented me with a table lamp; the Division, a farewell dinner and the gift of a radiogram—still one of my most treasured possessions. I was pleased and touched that Clem and Vi made a difficult journey on a foggy night to be present. Clem's tribute to my work was kind and appreciative; in his quiet way he had always been very friendly towards me.

He was a great Prime Minister, who had guided a turbulent Cabinet and an inexperienced Parliamentary Party, with an unerring instinct during one of the most difficult periods of our history. He had set us on the path to Socialism and had made some historic decisions. Beneath the unassuming appearance and laconic style was an inflexible resolve and an interior strength. He held the Party together and gave it unity. His unnecessary retirement made me both sad and angry. It was the result of one of those sordid little conspiracies far too common in our Party. Engineered by Stafford Cripps, ably assisted by Morrison and Dalton, the intention was to see Cripps's favourite protégé safely ensconced in a position of power, before he quit the political scene himself, in October 1950. What irony! Cripps, for so long admired by the Left, was the instrument by which the Party was saddled in the fullness of time with a leader of the extreme right, and the unity which Attlee had built gradually destroyed.

I continued to attend our annual conferences for the next few years, but every year I found them less and less to my liking. In 1959, Gaitskell, faced with a vote in favour of unilateral disarmament, declared that he and 'his friends', would 'fight, fight and fight again, to reverse the conference decision'. In 1960 there was the squabble about Clause IV; at Margate the attack on the Common Market. But the spirit which prompted this disarray within the Party is not dead. It has found a new target, and the Gaitskellites of today, in their premeditated and unwarranted attacks on the Prime Minister, show that they can work quite happily with the Left when it suits their purpose. I am reminded of a visit I paid to the Reichstag in the early days of Hitler's rise to power when there was just a sprinkling of

National Socialists. I sat in amazement as I saw Nationalist Socialists and Communists voting together. "Nothing strange in that," said Harry Grottewitz, "extremes always meet."

Among friends in the House with similar interests to my own was Kim McKay. We were both members of the Federal Union and both believed that Europe must federate or perish. I am more sure of this great truth today than I was in 1945.

Our hopes were high when, in 1948, steps were taken by the Brussels Treaty Powers—Britain, France and the three Benelux countries (Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg)—to call a conference to consider what steps might be taken to promote closer union in Europe. A strong delegation went to Paris from this country, under the leadership of Dalton. There were no other M.P.s on other delegations—ex-ambassadors, professors, lawyers and so on—but very little was achieved towards our goal of a United Europe. Even in those early stages, there appeared very little common ground between ourselves and the French and, at that time, my sympathies were all with the French. They were Federalists, but Dalton made it clear that we were utterly opposed to any form of Federalism which might mean giving up existing controls over our economy or our Welfare State, or cause a rift between ourselves and the rest of the Commonwealth.

Things moved a little at the second meeting in Paris, when agreement was reached on the formation of a Council of Europe and that the seat of the Council should be at Strasbourg. Meetings during the following year were attended by more countries, and Kim McKay was a member of our delegation—which pleased as much as surprised me, for it had been obvious that in the choice of former delegations some care had been exercised to keep out the Federalists. Kim was the only member who supported the French in their pressure for a Federal Europe. In the Commons, those of us who were interested in this movement met regularly and heard full reports of what was taking place. Among those in regular attendance were Lady Violet Bonham Carter and sometimes—when he could spare the time—Churchill himself.

Although not a member of our delegation—that I never expected to be—I went to Strasbourg with a group of members of the Federal Union in August 1949 and attended all the Assembly Sessions. It was easy to see why Dalton had feared that in

any Federal set-up, Churchill would have a magnificent platform. He dominated the Assembly in '49. I began to think we were well on the road to the United States of Europe (which Churchill had once declared we must build), for a recommendation was carried, asking for the creation of an economic union of free Europe, which would include the free circulation of men, goods and capital and the abolition, by stages, of restriction on men, money and goods.

I enjoyed my visit to Strasbourg. It was amusing in a way I had not expected. There was not much hotel accommodation in Strasbourg itself and when Kim met our plane, he introduced me to a funny little priest, in a soutane green with age, standing by the side of a venerable Peugeot. "Your chauffeur for the duration, Leah," Kim announced. "We've put you in a monastery." I stared at him unbelieving. He ran off chuckling, calling over his shoulder, "You're no temptation, love." He was very apologetic the next day. "I know you can take a joke," he said and presented me with a box of chocolate liqueurs—the sort of confection one had only dreamed about since pre-war days. I discovered later that Kim had put himself out to find me the most comfortable billet available. The monastery was grand, the monks certainly not Trappist and full of lively, informed conversation. The food was wonderful, home-baked bread and honey dripping from the comb, freshly caught trout and the produce of their farmyard; above all a magnificent view of the Vosges. Nor did I have to sleep in a cell, but in a comfortable guest chamber.

Nevertheless the journey to and from Strasbourg was a nightmare. My little priest was the most dangerous driver I have ever encountered. He passed everything on the road, cut every corner, never slowed down or braked, and in that old rattle-trap we went along like a sequence in an old-fashioned film. But how he enjoyed scaring me!

Later in the year, Kim was again at Strasbourg and, by his earnest belief in Federalism, persuaded the General Affairs Committee to carry a declaration that the Assembly's aim and goal was the creation of a political authority with limited functions but real powers.

One of my greatest disappointments, when I lost my seat in 1950, was that I lost the chance of being a delegate to the Council of Europe—in following years there was usually one woman delegate. Kim lost his seat at the same time. I sometimes

met him at Federal Union meetings, but he died in 1961, never in doubt that his ideals must come to fruition in the long run.

How many opportunities were missed in those early days, especially by our refusal to consider the Schuman Plan. Dalton's constant insistence that there could be no supra-national authority, very little economic integration and no political integration seemed to be the view prevailing throughout the Labour movement, up to the time of the Margate Conference where Gaitskell made his devastating attack on the Common Market.

I remember leaving the platform in despair at the applause which Gaitskell's speech evoked. Crossing the road, outside conference hall, I saw George Brown.

"I don't seem to have a friend left," I complained. "Just because I didn't clap and cheer and whoop with delight—and maybe I sniffed," I added. "If looks could kill, I wouldn't have got off that platform alive."

"Don't worry, brother," he said. "All the best people are with us." Certainly George Brown is one who has never changed his convictions on this question.

IV

Making Friends

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS is a good place in which to make friends—enemies too I suspect, although I was never conscious of having made any new ones. Morrison was an old *bête noire*, so I don't count him.

One's friends are not necessarily always on the same side of the House. It is a commonplace that two Members can enjoy a terrific slanging match in the course of a debate, and be seen an hour later, amicably drinking together in the Members' Smoking Room (not a place where, in my day, women members were made very welcome: a freezing glance or a lull in the buzz of conversation was enough to make the boldest turn tail).

My closest friends were those associated with me as Members of the Parliamentary Church Council of St Margaret's, Lucy Noel-Buxton and Skeffington-Lodge. We made it a practice to try always to attend Prayers, and to take Holy Communion in the Crypt on Saints' Days. When I lost my seat, I had the kindest letters from both the Speaker's Chaplain and the Rector of St Margaret's. I value them very much, not least because they refer to a side of Parliamentary work which goes unnoticed by most people.

I liked all our women Members—some of course more than others—with one exception.

Lucy Middleton was a special friend: we had worked together for years in the Peace Movement, and shared our little cupboard-like office; and most particularly I liked both my old friend Ellen Wilkinson and Barbara Castle. Although both these women were politically much more able than I was, I had a kind of protective instinct towards both of them. Barbara, brilliant indeed, was not nearly as tough as she liked to make out, and as, perhaps, through years of struggle she may now have become. In the early days of the 1945 Parliament she did not have an

easy time. Her very success as a young member aroused jealousy, and I had often to put up a fight for her against the malice of Jean Mann whose book *Woman at Westminster* was positively splenetic about Barbara. Fortunately I had the opportunity of reviewing it. More than once, I found the girl—who more than twenty years later became Minister of Transport, and then Secretary of State for Employment and Productivity, standing her ground against both the T.U.C. and the bosses—vulnerable and in tears in the Lady Members' room.

Perhaps the rough and tumble of political life may have toughened her. I compared two notes I had from her—one when I lost my seat in 1950—"your defeat is one of the biggest blows of this election. I miss you so; the Lady Members' room isn't the same without you"; and one when she was appointed to her last new job—"I may not succeed. But you know me, I'll have a bash."

Poor Ellen, I had known her so long and admired her so greatly that in spite of her ministerial duties we spent a lot of time together. Sometimes when she could get away, she would drive me over to see her sister, another brilliant woman but terribly ill all the time with asthma.

I do not think that Ellen had previously suffered from asthma herself, but I am sure that when her distressing attacks first started they were brought about by worry and anxiety over her work at the Ministry of Education. She had no cause for worry as far as I could make out, and I know that her permanent officials thought very highly of her. But a silly little man, W. G. Cove, started a campaign against her, an 'Ellen must go' campaign, than which nothing can be more hurtful to a Minister. It can only have been caused by jealousy. Cove had been notoriously lucky in succeeding to Ramsay MacDonald's old seat—Aberavon—in 1934. I think it very doubtful if he would have been selected for this South Wales mining seat except for the fact that he was a 'supported' M.P. for the N.U.T. with all his expenses paid and a good salary as the Union's Parliamentary secretary. In spite of his gilt-edged chances, he made nothing of them. Unless there are personal reasons, which did not exist in Cove's case, it is unusual for an M.P. to be more than twenty years in the House without achieving even a minor ministerial post. His unwarranted attacks on Ellen could only have been motivated by her success. In vain my colleague, Ralph

Morley, and I pointed out that the N.U.T. were not behind these attacks; that indeed at our Annual Conference at Easter she had received a standing ovation. I've often wondered if Cove might not have been the instrument of a more powerful personality—one to whom a successful woman was anathema!

It was whilst the 'Ellen must go' campaign was at its height that an incident distressing to me but amusing to many Members occurred. Ellen arrived late to answer her questions. Rushing breathlessly to the 'box', she apologised, explaining that she had been opening an Art Exhibition. Ellen had no dress sense and on this occasion she really was wearing the most appallingly funny hat one could imagine. I suppose it was the incongruity of an Art Exhibition and that hat which touched off the sense of humour of the House, for suddenly Members burst into peals of merriment. Nonplussed, Ellen stopped in mid-sentence, lost her place and had to be helped from the Chamber in a paroxysm of that anxious fight for breath from which asthmatics suffer. From that afternoon her attacks became more and more frequent. If she had been able to count on the backing of a powerful Minister, like Herbert Morrison, her close friend, the E.M.G. folly could have been ended. But Morrison was in hospital desperately ill with a thrombosis. Ellen felt deserted. The last time I saw her, we had been together to a luncheon party given by Clem and Vi to celebrate their Silver Wedding. The guests were Labour Party M.P.s who had been in the House with Clem in the 1929-31 Parliament. Ellen and I were the only two women survivors present. I was off to Bournemouth that afternoon to do a round of speaking engagements, and was a bit anxious about catching my train. In spite of obvious illness Ellen insisted upon coming with me in her Ministry's car to Waterloo.

On February 6 she died, alone in her flat, with no one to help her in those last desperate hours when, fighting against an attack, she took too many of the pills which alone could give her some relief. A bright and particular star had faded out of our firmament. In it there were never enough women of her quality.

Two women I admired and liked, not in my own Party, were Patricia Tweedsmuir (as she later became) and Megan Lloyd George, who later joined the Labour Party. How can one

describe Meg? Tiny, not pretty at all, yet somehow enchanting, with a little wizened-up face that never seemed to grow any older. Almost as brilliant a speaker as her great father, it was always good for a laugh whenever she followed him in debate and referred to him as 'My Right Honourable Friend, the Member for Caernarvon Boroughs'. I sometimes stayed with her at her flat and before going to bed she would present me with a peach.

"I love to have something to eat in bed," she would say, and I hadn't the nerve to reply, "I love something to drink, especially a whisky and soda."

She was friendly in all kinds of little ways. Once Oliver Baldwin had given me a lovely pair of ear-rings; but they were for pierced ears. "It's nothing," she said. "Get them pierced and I'll lend you my sleepers." She wrote in a letter to me, after her own unexpected defeat: "We had a lot of fun together—don't lose touch." One of the bits of fun with Megan that I remember best were our noon-day visits to the cinema. We were both movie fans, but could rarely get out in the evening. So we used to slip away after our morning committees, armed with sandwiches, fruit and chocolate, to enjoy a picnic lunch in the front row of the balcony, see the picture and return to Westminster in time for Prayers. She was a warm-hearted Welsh comrade who, like Ellen, died too soon. Say what one will about the equality of the sexes (it exists intellectually, with the balance of advantage to us), physically the House is a wearing job for a woman unless she is as strong as a horse, or, and I think this is important, does not get herself too emotionally involved.

That is why I salute Patricia Tweedsmuir, for going whilst, for her, the going was good. I shall never forget her introduction to the House. She had been elected in a bye-election at a time when the Tories were in the doldrums, exactly paralleling my own experience in 1930. Here was this slim, fair-haired young creature coming to their rescue from a constituency which made it relevant for everyone on our side of the House to chorus, "Grace Darling to the rescue". I thought it rather sweet and never called her by any other name.

She did not always have a very easy time, especially from a fellow Scot on our side of the House. On more than one occasion, when I heard our men say "Puss, Puss," I tried to catch the Speaker's eye and follow on as soon as possible to redress

the balance. Patricia's second wedding took place whilst we were still fellow members. I went to the wedding, and afterwards we held a reception in the Lady Members' Room to give her a present. All was sweetness and light! Patricia was one of the friends from the opposite side of the House who, after my defeat, sent me a charming letter saying how much I should be missed.

A question I am most frequently asked is if I have any particular memories of Churchill. I have quite a few.

In the 1930s I always felt a bit sorry for him. There he sat, third seat below the gangway, in solitary splendour, except for his two henchmen, Brendan Bracken and Bob Boothby. If he made one of his dry remarks and I smiled, down would come Morrison on me like a ton of bricks. "Don't encourage the fellow," he'd bark. Odd, when one remembers how well Churchill treated him in the Coalition Government during the war.

An incident which I found disturbing at the time still lingers in my memory. Will and I were staying one week-end at Willow Cottage and I had seen in the local press that Churchill was to speak at a meeting in one of the larger villages in the constituency. Always keen to hear a good political speaker, I said, "Do let's go and we'd better start early or we won't get in." There were five people in the village hall when we arrived; it swelled to nine before the meeting concluded, shortly after it had opened. Whenever the Epping Tories were particularly obnoxious to me, I would think to myself, 'They treated with equal rudeness a better man than you Gunga Din.' This was long before Churchill became the 'Saviour of his country', and was at a time when the Tories were still smarting under the attacks of bitter invective made against them during his renegade Liberal days.

Years later, I succeeded him in the Epping Division. Whenever I came face to face with him in the House, he seemed to glare at me and I imagined one of those cartoon balloons floating above his head and revealing secret thoughts such as, 'What a monstrous thing, a socialist and a woman at that to represent my old seat.' I decided that if ever I had the opportunity, I would break down this obvious distaste of myself. The opportunity came suddenly and unexpectedly. I was on my feet asking a 'supplementary' when he entered the Chamber. It was his seventieth birthday and he was greeted with a storm of cheers.

I sat down and when the tumult had ceased, I rose again and began, "I should like to bring birthday greetings to the Right Honourable gentleman from his old constituency of Epping, which I now have the honour to represent." Gravely, Churchill rose in his place and bowed. Later that afternoon, the Tory Chief Whip came to me. "The old man was very much touched by what you said—asked me to thank you!"

A few months later there was a very surprising occurrence. Mr Speaker never makes promises about calling a Member. One can put down one's name saying one would like to be called, but it is left to Mr Speaker to decide. One Friday morning I went to his office to put down my name to speak in the Foreign Affairs debate. I was very surprised when after prayers the clerk at the table handed me a note from Mr Speaker. It said, "I am calling Mr Francis Noel Baker to speak first; then an Opposition speaker, then you. However long, or however short the first two speakers are, I rely on you to sit down at exactly five minutes to twelve. The Rt. Hon. gentleman, the Member for Wanstead and Woodford will then speak."

I doubt if there were many other Members in the House to whom Mr Speaker would have given such explicit instructions. He might not always like what I said, but he could rely on me to cut it short.

"Can't think why the Speaker calls you so often," Mrs Mann tartly remarked on one occasion.

"Because he knows I won't go on and on and on and am not malicious to other lady members," I answered equally tart. The Honourable Lady was giving poor Grace Darling some of her cattiest digs at that time, although in her reminiscences she declares they were the greatest of friends. I hope so!

On this strange Friday morning, I obeyed orders and sat down exactly at five minutes to twelve, slightly bewildered by some strange goings on. Churchill rose and began, "This is the first occasion on which I've had the opportunity of following the Hon. Member for Epping." The House saw the joke and roared appreciatively. Hansard, I thought, won't see it and will insist on sticking to the conventional 'The Hon. Lady the Member for Epping.' However, having acknowledged my existence, Churchill then began to question my facts about the new Polish boundaries. I stuck to my point—time will show which of us was right. After waiting for the customary two opposition speakers,

I left the Chamber with Megan. "It isn't often Churchill condescends to exchange an argument with a back-bencher," she said. Laughing, I replied that anyhow, I would see that the Hansard people did not deprive him of his little joke and, after visiting them in their sanctum, went to the dining room for lunch.

I usually spent Friday afternoons, the House not sitting, clearing up my correspondence with my secretary. I found her in a fine old tizzy.

"Where on earth have you been?" she asked. "The Chief Whip has had me buzzing all over the place looking for you. Princess Elizabeth wished to talk to you."

So that was what all the tight schedule had been about. Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip had come down to the House especially to hear Churchill speak, and I hadn't the slightest notion they were there, and could not make out what all the craned necks in the galleries had been for. I was naturally disappointed, because I had always had a special affection for Elizabeth ever since she was a little girl and always hoped, even when her uncle was heir apparent, that she would come to the throne during my lifetime. I was also a bit worried. I had some idea that one always obeyed a royal invitation, that it was bad manners not to do so. Ought I to apologise? I asked the advice of my ever-friendly Chief Tory Whip. He was not sure either, but would ask the Princess's Private Secretary. "Yes, it was in order to apologise." So I did, and got a charming reply through the secretary. In retrospect it seems terribly funny that one should get newspaper coverage for so small an incident: 'Princess Elizabeth hears for the first time a woman M.P. speak in the House of Commons'. "Well!" I thought, "it may be good for a few votes in Chingford."

As it turned out, Churchill did not think me a monster. A few days after my defeat, I had a letter from my friend, Howard Davies, who had been standing as Liberal candidate against Churchill and who lived in my constituency. After mentioning how sorry he was that neither I nor the Liberal candidate had been elected, he complimented me on the "fearless and effective work" I had put in, "on behalf of people of all parties," and continued:

There is something else I think I should tell you. I don't know

if you will be pleased to hear it, but at least you will be interested I am sure.

At the Count in Woodford yesterday, I was sitting next to Churchill (they had to borrow my table to put his excess votes on). Unofficially Churchill was receiving the latest election bulletins via a radio outside the hall. When the message was given to him that you had been defeated at Epping, he turned to me and said, "Great pity; great pity, she was a very good Member, and a good House of Commons woman."

Well, of course I was pleased. To be a good House of Commons man or woman was the highest accolade Churchill could bestow on anyone.

Most House of Commons friendships are very ephemeral. They last during the period one is a Member, but as soon as a seat is lost, and the condolences, sincere at the time, are written, one is entirely forgotten; at least that was what I thought. Yet sometimes something will stir the memory of old colleagues. Then it is a heart-warming experience. When I was made a Dame of the British Empire, I had literally hundreds of letters from old House of Commons friends. Every Member of the Cabinet with whom I had sat, even as far back as 1930, wrote congratulations this time and not condolences.

I have always enjoyed the great good fortune of a wide circle of affectionate friends, but I never make intimate friends. The contemporary phrase 'we are very close' sets up in me a reaction of withdrawal. We come into the world alone; we must leave it alone. One can come to terms with the world and come to terms with oneself, but one must leave a solitude within the heart. Only thus can one consciously listen to the voice within; the voice which gives certainty and coherence to life and to the universe.

Travelling Abroad

I HAD TRAVELLED fairly widely before I entered Parliament, both in the United States to see my family, and in the Central European countries to spend holidays with the many friends I had made there. But there are certain advantages and facilities one gets as an M.P. that are not available to the ordinary traveller. I determined to exercise my advantage to the full, especially of visiting the 'Iron Curtain' countries, closed to the ordinary visitor unable to obtain a visa.

My first opportunity came within a few weeks of the 1945 election. Marshal Tito of Yugoslavia had issued an open invitation to visit his country for its first peace-time elections and see just how democratically they would be run. I have no idea who took up the invitation, or who decided which people should form the delegation; but I was included, and so was one of our Labour Whips. There were also Konni Zilliacus, with whom many of us were renewing old friendships from League of Nations days, Kingsley Martin and one or two non-parliamentarians who had fought with Tito's partisans.

The Marshal sent his own plane to fetch us. Whatever was to follow, our journey out proved harrowing: all Europe was fog-bound, and one airfield after another declined to take us for refuelling. With our petrol supply dangerously low we flew on to Belgrade, only to find it impossible to land there. Everyone was pretty anxious by now, although, writing in the *New Statesman* of our adventure, Kingsley Martin said, "but Leah Manning sat there, reading the life of Marshal Tito and looking like the Rock of Gibraltar." We landed later at a partly-constructed airfield, our flare path a few rows of fairy lights and (so the pilot declared) with no more than an eggcupful of petrol.

Wherever we went we had a terrific welcome, but were saddened by the poverty and destruction, and by the terrible photographs we saw of the horrors wreaked on the population by

their own fascists. We spent election day visiting polling booths in many villages. Everything was in perfect order and in most places 100 per cent of the population had voted by noon. I never go out on polling days at home, trying to pull in voters at ten minutes to nine, without thinking of the enthusiasm of those Yugoslav peasants. In the evening we went back to Belgrade, to watch, with thousands of others, the 'count' conducted publicly, behind plate-glass windows. After the declaration we joined the throng in the street, dancing a complicated national dance—Zilly and Kingsley Martin still wearing the wilted garlands with which we had been decorated and looking like Paul and Barnabas at Lystra. I discreetly ditched mine in a much-needed loo.

We had long discussions with the Marshal about trade between our two countries, and with the various relief agencies as to the best way England might help. Our return was delayed by atrocious weather. Day after day we went down to the airfield without our plane being able to take off, and at last we decided to go by train although aware that we should encounter broken-down bridges and other hazards on the way. The scene at the station on the night that we left was pitiful—a milling throng of people, each carrying a rough coffin which they hoped, by some small identification, might contain the body of a father, a husband, a son or a daughter rescued from a common grave into which they had been flung after being treacherously done to death. We had visited one of those common graves, newly opened. It was a horrible, nauseating sight. Nevertheless it was necessary to have the evidence of one's own eyes. Later I was able to describe, during a foreign affairs debate, the scene of grieving men and women as they tried to identify and retrieve these poor remains.

During the Christmas recess in 1946 I visited Poland at the invitation of the Polish Women's National Committee. I had a luxurious time, for I stayed at the British Embassy and was coddled by the Ambassador. I am not sure how this came about, unless it was by the instigation of a young English Tory, Anthony Nutting, whom I much admired, and who was a personal friend of the Ambassador.

The destruction of many parts of Poland, especially of the Jewish Ghettos, was total, and much greater than anything we had seen in Yugoslavia. The amazing thing about the Polish

people, at least at that time, was their devotion to both the Communist State and the Catholic Church. Perhaps authoritarianism suits them. Passing through villages on a Sunday morning, there would be a great crowd outside every village church, waiting for, perhaps, the third Mass of the morning. In completely shattered towns and villages, men, women and children were building or repairing churches, while they themselves were living in holes in the ground—old potato clamps, in which they had first hidden from the enemy. "Why don't you build your own houses first?" I once asked. They looked at me in utter disbelief. "Build houses for ourselves, before we restore God's House!" Communist, yes! but with a great longing for the ideas and ideals of the West. "We must always keep a window open to the West," the President told me.

The sufferings of the Polish people during the occupation have been described many times. But it was the stories told me by children, even more than the horrifying film of Auschwitz, which moved me most. I visited several homes for orphan children. Although loved, secure and cared-for now, every child still bore the marks of suffering, privation and fear. What could drive from those innocent eyes the memory of being hunted down, of walking hundreds of miles through unknown forests, shoeless, with nothing to eat and little to wear, often deep in snow? A sudden noise and one could still see the clutch at the heart of a tired, timid child, running, stumbling away from an unknown, unseen monster.

Stories of the heroic resistance of the Jewish people, hiding in the sewers under the city, stifling the cry of a babe with a shawl across the mouth, lest the tiny noise reveal their presence, living in a world of Trappist silence, their dead piled up in their bunkers, may be read about. But it was only by seeing and talking to the survivors that I came to a full realisation of their sufferings. I once tried to describe them to a Jewish audience in New York. I did not ask for money, but in a letter their Rabbi told me it had flowed in, to be sent to children's homes.

Some years later, I went with a small delegation, which included Kingsley Martin, to the great exhibition which had been opened in the 'Regained Territories'. What enormous pride the Poles had in the re-settlement which had taken place there. My mind went back many years to a holiday I had spent when this was German territory, and to the arrogance of the German

landowners towards the Polish peasants who worked on the land for them in conditions approaching slavery—'the over-flowing Polish bread basket' reminded me of Rome's description of conquered Britain: 'Our granary of the North.'

In 1947 I received an invitation for a lecture tour in the States, through the Abraham Lincoln Brigade (part of the International Brigade), many of whom I had met in Spain. The object was two-fold, mainly to raise money for orphanages in France and Belgium where there were still orphans from the Civil War, but also to serve as a reminder that economic aid to Franco was a betrayal of all that our two democratic nations had fought for in six years of bloody war. Publicity arrangements for anyone doing a lecture tour in the States are always superb. I had a public relations officer, who booked the biggest hall in every city, including Madison Square Gardens in New York; I met the most important people, dining with Mrs Roosevelt in her flat; I spoke unceasingly at breakfast, luncheon, afternoon meetings of women, and at parties after my big public meetings in the evening.

I was like a puppet on a string, and it wasn't all beer and skittles. There were many things I hated, such as standing on a platform surrounded by photographers and television cameras, and trying to eat all that terrible food. Rations, I suppose, had caused my stomach to shrink, and the sight of so much food—rare steaks stretching from one side of a great platter to the other—nauseated me so that all I could manage for the first week was a small salad. This so upset my P.R.O. that he took me to the doctor to 'get my appetite stimulated'. Of course what really worried him was that if I starved, I would not be able to stand the rigours of his schedule.

I was extremely hurt by the attitude of the English Speaking Union, of which I was a founder member. In the early years after the First World War, I had been given one of two scholarships awarded by E.S.U. to visit America and talk to groups of people. I had had a marvellous time, and had been treated with great hospitality and kindness. Now, although branches of the E.S.U. were approached in several cities, they refused to organise even the smallest reception for me, or even to meet me.

At some parties, where I was invited to speak on England under a Labour Government, I met with great hostility, especially

when I tried to describe our National Health Service. "If the woman believes in that sort of thing, she must be a commie," was one remark I heard. One disappointment was of my own making. I did not speak in the Hollywood Bowl, the only large hall I missed. This was at a time when our quota policy for entry into Israel was under fierce attack by International Jewry and a boatload of immigrants was sailing the seven seas trying to find a port to land at. Unlike some other politicians, it has always been my policy to sustain my Government when abroad. Matters of which I disapproved, and I certainly disapproved Bevin's policy in this respect, I cut out of my speeches, and as far as possible from my conversations. When I was invited to take the collection at a vast meeting in the Bowl in aid of Jewish refugees, I had to find a viable excuse for not accepting. I quickly got myself invited to address a University campus meeting, and very stimulating it was.

In some way or another, my scruples were noted at Westminster; on my return I received, at the opening of the new session, a warm and appreciative letter from Willie Whiteley, our Chief Whip, thanking me for the good work I had done in the States and for the way I had kept our end up.

Arising out of my visit to the States, I began on my return a campaign against Horror Comics. I had been stupefied to find, in the houses of quite intelligent people, glassy-eyed children wallowing in these outrageous pulp magazines which consisted entirely of sadistic violence, sex and unbelievable rubbish. Parents and teachers seemed unable to control their children's addiction. I had never seen such comics in England but on investigation I discovered they were on sale in some disreputable newsagents. I wrote a series of articles for *The Schoolmaster*, describing these vicious drugs for the child mind, then raised the question in Parliament. Since the exhaustion of the dollar credit was a matter of paramount importance at that moment, I directed my question to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, asking him how much money was being spent on the import of children's comics from the United States. I was extremely annoyed by his cursory reply of "I don't know". In a 'supplementary' I protested and asked whether it was not his business in these days of penury to know if we were spending dollars on imports which were not only

useless but pernicious, and on reflection did he not consider his answer disrespectful.

I was not at all satisfied by his further reply to my supplementary. I saw him privately and offered to put some of this material in the library, a suggestion from which he shrank in horror; but he promised to make further enquiries. He afterwards told me that the papers had been imported as packing in cases holding quite innocent goods.

My campaign was taken up by many women's organisations and religious bodies, but it was a long time before it bore fruit and then only after a vigorous push by the National Union of Teachers when the Children and Young Persons (Harmful Publications) Act was passed in 1954.

Soon after my return from the States, I followed Megan Lloyd George into the Chair of an all party women's organisation, the successor of the Women's Committee against War and Fascism. There were communists in it, but it was certainly not what Transport House called a 'Front Organisation'—indeed it seemed to me to be highly respectable. When we held a conference in Paris, soon after the war, we were entertained at the British Embassy, whilst Megan and I were amongst those who stayed at an hotel which the Embassy ran for foreign visitors. Moreover we had the patronage of the Queen of Belgium. But for some reason the Committee was frowned on by the Parliamentary Party. First Herbert Morrison persuaded Megan to resign her chairmanship, then gentle efforts were made to persuade me to do the same. My chief seducer was Jim Callaghan—dear Jim, so kind and so affable. I never would have guessed, in those days, the young man had so much steel in him. He insisted I had some kind of spirit guide—he said he had had one himself after a visit to Russia and had found it very difficult to shake off. He would not divulge who it was, but said Tamara Rust had me in charge. At that time Tamara was the wife of the editor of the *Daily Worker*. When he died she became a Marchioness and her husband the only hereditary communist peer in the Lords.

I was very fond of Tamara; we had been good friends for many years in the international women's movement, but she never had the slightest influence over me, and, let it be confessed, except for Stewart Headlam in my teens, neither had anyone

else. In politics, religion and the philosophy of life, my only formative influences have been poetry, literature and music.

My term of office in the Chair of the Women's Movement ended after a conference at which the Yugoslav delegation complained bitterly of the effects of the Cominform blockade. My sympathy with them was not well-received by some of the delegates, and probably as a result of my protection from the Chair, I received an invitation from Vida Tomsic, President of the Yugoslav Women's Committee, to attend a conference they were organising on 'The Care of the Mother and the Child'. This turned out to be a most thrilling adventure. I have not described in any detail the journeys I made abroad, but I think some parts of this one are well worth relating.

The conference itself was exciting enough. I am so used to flower-decked hats, the formalised, conventional conduct of conferences both here and in America, that I found this one refreshingly different. It was held in Zagreb and, of the 1,000 delegates who attended, many had set out on horse-back from remote mountain villages in Macedonia, Bosnia and Serbia, days before. Some were women who, until a year or two earlier, had gone veiled from girlhood. Many of the women were university graduates of great distinction—doctors, lawyers, scientists—who before the war had led lives of affluence; others were simple peasants who had never been to school, never indeed left their villages, until the fascists drove them into the forests and hills. Muslim women, Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, they displayed a medley of gorgeous peasant dresses and Western attire. Some were dark and lithe as Indians, others had pale, mobile Slav features. It was a momentous gathering for these women, awake to the hard problems facing their country after centuries of domination by greedy and corrupt conquerors, and the destruction of a war so recently ended.

There was another big difference between this conference and many others I have attended. No vast array of officials, executives, notabilities and guests of honour appeared on the platform; nor were delegates forced to listen to long boring speeches whilst they were longing to speak themselves. The Government, including Marshal Tito, occupied the front row of the hall; behind them sat foreign delegates from all over the world with their interpreters, then the vast body of native dele-

gates. From the platform the President controlled the meeting, with her secretary. On the first morning the secretary read out a list of twenty women who had made some special contribution to their country's need during the year and called them to come and sit beside her on the platform. Among them I can remember a young Muslim girl who had broken her own records on sixteen occasions during the year, picking cotton, and a very old peasant woman who would not give up her work on a co-operative farm, in spite of her age, and even though she had a pension because her husband was a national hero, who had been murdered defending his farm. She had the carved features of a mediaeval saint, a black kerchief bound tightly round her head and a million petticoats that rustled like a cornfield every time she moved. There were women Ministers galore—Ministers of quite unexpected departments, like Finance, Fuel and Power, as well as Education and Social Security; jolly they were, and good-humoured, talking to the delegates, like Dutch uncles, about waste and their country's economy.

On the last morning, Marshal Tito addressed the meeting. Like most Croats, he is tall and handsome and has the power to evoke personal affection as well as devotion to a cause. I had met and talked to the Marshal on several occasions, since the days when I first knew him in Paris during the civil war in Spain, but I had never heard him address an audience and I was caught by surprise. He used no spell-binding tricks of oratory, but just talked to that great assembly of women, in quiet conversational tones, the smile coming and going on the mobile, expressive face; taking them into his confidence; asking them for their help, telling them they had nothing to fear either from the Cominform blockade, or the near famine conditions they would face in the coming winter. They should keep steady courageous hearts, and help the weaker women in their Branches to understand why the bread ration must be cut, why there was little to be bought in the shops, above all why they must go on working hard so that they might sell their products to the Western world in return for the machinery their country needed. He gave a simple talk on the economics of their situation which the simplest among them could understand.

The part of his speech which impressed me most, came at the end. "But don't mistake your function," he warned them sternly. "I sometimes hear of over-enthusiastic members of your

organisation, who try to urge a young mother into a factory or to undertake a voluntary task beyond her strength. Don't you realise," he went on, "how you tear that woman apart? Loyalty to her organisation pulls her in one direction; the needs of her family in another. Remember she helps her country equally by rearing a healthy, happy family, as by raising its production in a factory."

Wise words from a Head of State!

After the conference, I was invited to spend some time in any part of Yugoslavia I wished to see. It did not take me long to make up my mind. 'Macedonia, stern and wild': no words could better describe this rugged oft-conquered mountainous country enjoying, for the first time in its history, the status of an autonomous republic. Here East and West meet and mingle and the new economy comes pressing closely upon the heels of the old. The people at the time I was there had seized their hard-won liberty with both hands. Nowhere was the contrast between old and new more sharply marked than in the town of Skoplje. Since my visit, a terrible earthquake has devastated the whole town and it has been completely re-built. But it remains in my memory as it was in 1948.

On one side of the river there were parks, squares, fine new public buildings, blocks of flats, good hotels, an excellent museum and the air-field. Across the bridge the town immediately became positively mediaeval and intensely Turkish in appearance and atmosphere, with a market full of picturesque and lively squalor.

I found this transition period, from old to new, full of interest. I was told that if I wanted to see the operation in full process, I should visit one of the more inaccessible mountain villages. That is why I set out through the old town, one bright October morning, on the road to Lazarapolj.

"It's a seven hour journey, the road is difficult and there is no sanitation in the village," I was warned. If my friends and I had never reached Lazarapolj, the drive would have been worthwhile. The road wound through narrow, winding passes, with wild towering crags above and beyond us, up and up by alarming hair-pin bends, with all around the autumn colours a burning glory of umber, gold and flame. Now we caught the mournful cadences of a lament, as on the opposite side of the valley a little file of mourning peasants carried a companion to his long rest; then an agile old woman, brown as an Indian,

smacked her donkey's rump and clambered with him cursing, up among the rocks to save her beast from a headlong collision with the Chevrolet I had been lent for the trip. Amid all the grandeur, we came suddenly upon the growing power-house of the new industrial state—a camp on the mountainside and, in the valley, the early stages of a huge hydro-electric station which was to supply all Macedonia with electric current. Tito's army was no spit and polish brigade: here was part of it, working away with pick and shovel, good training for sappers lustily singing a partisan song.

At last we came to a mountain hut beside a rickety bridge, which indicated that we had reached the last stage of our journey. And there before us was a narrow road, zigzagging up an almost perpendicular mountainside, 4,000 feet above sea level. We sounded our horn and out from the hut ran an antique peasant to warn us that we must wait while he telephoned to find out if there was any vehicle on the way down, and to warn the village that nothing must set out once we had begun the climb. In a surprisingly short time we had reached the top without incident, to be welcomed by a reception committee and conducted to the Farmers' Club where an excellent meal, accompanied by lashings of rakkia, awaited us. For hours we sat and talked, while the crowd around us grew denser. The dim electric light gave three warning flickers and went out. The women ran for oil lamps and we went on talking, for they had a spell-binding story to tell.

Before the war Lazarapolj was a bare village on a bare mountain. No one from the outside world visited it, for it could only be reached by a goat track. Anyone making the hazardous journey would have found only women and children and a few old men. The obdurate earth yielded no sustenance for man or beast, so the young men went off to Australia, New Zealand, the U.S.A., or the less adventurous to Europe or the cities of their own land. The women stayed at home. They did beautiful embroidery, made rugs and their own clothing on hand looms, and sang long sad laments for their absent husbands. It was not easy even to spend the money their husbands sent. In winter, the snow-bound mountains and the woods infested with wild animals made it a difficult, dangerous task to reach farms in neighbouring villages.

Then came the war.

At first only rumours reached Lazarapolj. The women were not unduly perturbed, their isolation was now their protection.

Nevertheless, one quiet September morning, bands of fascists burst into the village. They ran through the houses killing and raping women and children and tying up the old men for questioning. As many women as could do so escaped into the woods with their children. They were in a terrible predicament, without food, or knowledge of the best direction to take or the whereabouts of the enemy. Hiding by day and travelling by night some of them finally reached the town of Bitol, some two hundred miles distant. Many perished on the way from hunger and disease.

In the meantime, the strength of the Partisans under Marshal Tito was growing in arms and equipment as well as training. Churchill, now convinced that Tito must have all possible help, sent technical experts from England who were parachuted into the woods. Yugoslavs from all over the world were finding their way home, anxious to help in the liberation of their country. Among these were men from Lazarapolj. They formed their own brigade and, when they heard what had happened to their wives and children, took a vow that never again would they be left unprotected. Somehow or another they would wring a living from the reluctant earth. The skills they had learned in other countries should be devoted to the reconstruction of their own village. When victory was won, forty families set out from Bitol. With them they brought a carpet loom, for many of the women had learned this skill during their exile. They would not rely on the chances of agriculture alone; there must be subsidiary industries. How they succeeded in building a good life was the story they told us that evening. The result of their endeavours I saw the next day.

I seemed wide awake almost before I had fallen asleep. Although the stars were still shining, the air was full of the bustle and stir of a new day and I remembered that work began at six. Lazarapolj is a Workers' Co-operative. I had been told that, from six in the morning until two in the afternoon, everyone worked for the village enterprises and that each worker earned in accordance with the work performed, a percentage of his earnings going back into the investment pool for capital expenditure. The village had its People's Authority and Works Council, democratically elected, and from these bodies were elected an Executive Committee and a Director and Deputy Director to

carry on the day-to-day business of the enterprises. Matters of policy, expenditure, and priorities in capital expenditure were decided at an aggregate meeting of the whole village. At such a village meeting, for example, a decision might be taken as to which should come first, a sewerage system, a more powerful electric station or a paved street; or which might be more profitable, a bull for artificial insemination or a fleet of new trucks.

After two o'clock, the villagers were free to give their time to their own plots of land, their homes and gardens or the cultural activities, of which there were many.

The village soon found that, with patient cultivation, they could grow two crops, potatoes and cabbage, as well as food for their beasts. There was sufficient pasture for their sheep, and on the hills was timber in plenty to cut and sell for fuel and to build their new homes. But the great project which engaged their attention in the earliest stages was how to end their isolation. With a government subsidy they decided to build a mountain road.

"But had you civil engineers?" I asked my guide.

"No, of course not," was the answer, "but many of us were experienced in road building in other countries."

"How did you choose where to make your road?" was my next question.

"Ah," he replied with a twinkle in his eye, "that was easy. We found the most intelligent donkey in the village, took him down to the existing road, tied a bell round his neck and let him find his way home. Where his bell led us we followed and pegged out our road." Well, it's a good story even if of doubtful veracity.

Whilst some men made the road, cultivated the soil, tended the sheep, cut timber or carried on afforestation, others were busy with the factory project. It seemed almost an insult to call it a factory. Space, light, air and sunshine made the carpet factory a joy to work in. The one loom carried from Bitol had become sixteen, all constructed in the village. The enchanting scene made by women and girls, three or four to a loom, eyes darting from pattern to growing design, hands flying among the threads, and the glowing colours like jewels and flowers standing out from the soft Persian background, remains a treasured memory. If I ever owned a Lazarapolj carpet, it would find a place on my wall and not under my feet.

A small textile factory, a rabbitry of chinchillas, and a saw mill, completed the industrial complex at that time. I am sure by now it will have grown considerably, but not I hope to such an extent that the charm and personality of the village have been lost.

The next morning, I saw the third prong of the mixed economy of the village. From the factory windows was a view of a green terraced garden leading to an artificial lake fed by a hidden viaduct from the mountains. The People's Authority had in view not only an influx of summer visitors, but the certainty of making Lazarapolj a popular centre for winter sports, skating on the lakes, ski-ing on the mountainside, and above all hunting. The woods abound in game of every description—wild boar, wolves and occasionally a bear. The men are fine shots and they nourished the ambition that one day Marshal Tito would come and enjoy the hunt with his old Partisans in the woods about Lazarapolj.

The greatest activity in the village was building. New homes, fine and spacious, but in the old Macedonian style, with storehouse below and living rooms above, were springing up with great rapidity. Where beasts once lived in the storehouse, fuel was stacked for the winter, as well as harvested crops for man and beast, and the large barrel of unfermented grape juice and the smaller barrel of rakkia. During my stay the first shop in the village was opened, a source of never-ending wonder to the children and pride to their parents. For the first time the children could choose and buy their own sweets! Education, too, was making great strides, with a primary school in the village, and boys and girls going to the town for Further Education at higher secondary, technical and agricultural institutions. This for their parents was the greatest achievement of all.

In the quiet evocative light of a late autumn evening, I wandered with an old peasant over the upper hills to which he had led his flocks. He sniffed the air. "In two days, snow," he said. "Then it will lie on the ground till spring comes." Yes spring! but it had already come for the people of Lazarapolj. The winter of their discontent was passed. They had made their own spring.

It is more than twenty years since I was in what had once been a bare village on a bare mountain, but on which a miracle had been wrought. I often wonder and think about it; how it

has prospered; how it has changed. One thing I am certain will not change: the courage, tenacity and ingenuity of its people.

In 1949 I received an invitation to lead a delegation of representative women to the Soviet Union. We were a mixed bag, a doctor, a housewife, a factory worker, a journalist, a social scientist and myself. I accepted gladly. My last visit had been very short—indeed I got no further than Moscow, leaving abruptly to go to Spain—so any comparisons I would be able to make would be with a very early visit, nearly thirty years before. But with a Soviet Government it is possible to revolutionise a country in a way that a slow-moving democracy could not possibly attempt, and the changes I found were surprising. In those early days we had seen a country shattered by war and the intervention of foreign powers, and with tens of thousands of orphaned children roaming the streets who had to be rescued. Pathetic but courageous attempts to make literate one of the most illiterate countries in Europe, and to offer to all the people that enjoyment of the beauty to be found in art, in music and in literature which before the revolution had been the sole prerogative of the aristocracy, vied with the need to solve the twin problems of homelessness and crime.

"You may see anything you want to see," we were told, after our V.I.P. welcome in Leningrad. I would have been happy to stay for a month in that beautiful Venice of the North, but this was a working holiday. On more than one occasion we went to bed at midnight only to be called at 4.30 a.m. to catch a plane to take us on our way. Because we were a representative group we all wanted to see different things—factories, churches, prisons, schools, orphanages, clinics and co-operative farms. After our day's work we met in conference before dinner to pool our experiences and prepare the pamphlet which we afterwards published.

My natural interest was in education and every kind of provision made for children. I had never forgotten those homeless ones I had seen after the First World War. I have little doubt that the education system has changed considerably since 1949, for there is constant experiment and change of emphasis. Perhaps what intrigued me most was that, in such an egalitarian country, no nonsense existed about picking out the élite and giving these children the best possible chance to develop from the earliest

possible age. Talent spotting began with the very young, whether in the arts, ballet, drama, music and, I guess now, what is of even greater importance, science and technology, and talented children were given the very best training available. So long as the rest get their due share, I am in favour of such a system.

The handsome school buildings, well-trained and well-paid teachers and the fact that education begins early and never stops for the willing, filled me with envy. The U.S.S.R. had the two things which we still lack: adequate nurseries and crèches for the pre-school child and adequate further education for the young factory worker; adequate recreation too, whether in the Parks of Recreation and Leisure, or in the Palaces of the Young Pioneers or the Halls of the Komsomols. In their elaborate gymnasias and music practice rooms, I saw the beginnings of that training for perfection which has given so much pleasure to us at home, in the performances of young Soviet citizens on our own television screens.

In all the schools I visited English was the second language, but to my surprise I did not find the classics taught anywhere. Why teach dead languages, they argued, and did not agree with me when I retorted that they were leaving untapped some of the greatest beauty and highest philosophies ever conceived by mankind. "But we can get it all in translation, comrade," was their polite rejoinder. I left it at that, but hope by now they will have changed their minds and have realised that the finest translations miss the grace and authority of the original work.

I spent a day and a night in a children's paradise, a holiday camp, and a boarding school for orphaned children. The only other country where I have seen anything similar is in the U.S.A. There the holiday camp for the long summer holiday is run on much the same lines and is commonplace. I wonder which is the more civilised, to let children have a damned good time in their own way, and their parents—especially their mothers—take a rest from their labours, or to drag them along to the seaside where most landladies regard them as a pest and a nuisance.

The highlights of my visit were the time spent in Georgia and the moving experience of Stalingrad. The men in Georgia are surely the most handsome in the whole of the Soviet Union. I replied to the toast of 'Our distinguished guests', and could not refrain from telling them so, which made me very popular.

Whilst in Georgia we visited a co-operative farm, which also had something new and strange to show us, for it not only bred silkworms, but carried out every operation from growing mulberry bushes (on the leaves of which the little grubs fed) to the finished gossamer material. Even the dyes and designs for the silk were made on the farm. Before we left we were each presented with a length sufficient for making an evening dress. It is completely uncrushable and can be squeezed into a packet small enough to go into a handbag, yet come out at the end of a journey without a crease.

The heroism of Stalingrad must surely be a cherished memory in the hearts of all who have ever fought in the cause of freedom. We saw the factory where the last stand was made, and the new city rising terrace by terrace behind it. Through the heart of all quietly flows the Don with Parks of Recreation along its banks. We were taken to the museum which houses memories and relics of the great struggle. Here in the place of honour is proudly displayed the great sword of Stalingrad. I felt a pricking behind my eyes as I stood quietly watching and remembering how I had stood for hours in the queue which waited to see the Sword in the Palace of Westminster. At that time every Soviet soldier had been our brother. What blunders of politicians and generals had led to the present situation, when I read in my paper (February 28, 1968):

A £55 million radar station, that will give Britain much more warning of a Russian nuclear missile attack, is to be built at Orfordness on the Suffolk coast.

Wherever I travelled in the countries of Eastern Europe, I was struck by the utter dedication of youth to the reconstruction of their devastated homelands. In Stalingrad I was told a story of such dedication—gruesome and without glamour. When the siege came to an end there were tens of thousands of corpses, German and Russian, in the frozen snow. Those bodies had to be disposed of before spring released them from the icy grip of their refrigeration. Workers on such a task needed youth and strength, for there was nowhere for them to live and no way of getting food. The call went out. At once thousands of Kom-somols, many of them teenage boys and girls, responded to the call. They made their homes in the shattered aircraft which

littered the ground; they drove their trucks with food and oil-stoves over the frozen waste. Before spring came their task was accomplished.

For all our hard work, we had many pleasures, with visits to the Bolshoi the greatest of all. It was fun to see the way in which the ballerinas responded to a curtain call. At the end of each act, as the ballerinas came to the front of the stage, the teenagers would rush forward to stand adoringly at the edge of the proscenium while the ballerinas clapped them—or themselves, I am not sure which.

The cinema, too, was much more advanced technically than ours at that time. The wide screen was used everywhere, with birds flying out into the auditorium and trains rushing forward, so that one shrank back into one's seat in alarm. Whilst my colleagues went to the theatre, I spent a day at the Children's Theatre House, watching the boys and girls write their own scripts, paint their own scenery, devise their costumes and learn the elements of production. Perhaps one way of winning back our young people to the live theatre would be something of this kind. I remember, years ago, there was such a movement, but it died from lack of interest. Considering the great success our young people have made of the Youth Theatre productions, I believe there could be a revival of the Children's Theatre, but it needs something more than a flickering, sporadic interest.

This, my last journey to the U.S.S.R., was exciting and informative. It met with great disapproval in my constituency, one local rag describing it in the words, "Leah Manning sticks out her neck again." Well, I'm glad I've lived to see thousands of English people 'sticking out their necks.' Tourism to Eastern Europe becomes yearly more popular; more important has been the exchange of cultures through the theatre and music—and even modern fashions. These cultural exchanges have been of slow growth, with every now and again some super-suspicious busybody threatening that they should be stopped. It is to our artists, ever more sensitive than politicians, that we owe this enlightenment.

VI

Back to the Old Love Plus a Break

I HAD RELINQUISHED both my political career and, except for two holidays in Canada, my journeys east and west.

But I was still comparatively young, so I decided to return to my old love, teaching. And exactly the kind of work I wanted was waiting for me. I had taught in almost every existing type of state school: a slum, mixed, all-age school; a senior girls' school; a boys' grammar school; and an open air school for delicate and handicapped children with a small class for the E.S.N. I had spent years on the administrative side, again dealing exclusively with the state service, so why not give the independent sector a try?

Many years earlier, my friend Kitty Clare had decided that the village school might be giving a sound education, but did not measure up to her hygienic standards. She decided to teach her own little brood at home. Although a university graduate, she was not a trained teacher. When she consulted me, we together worked out some plans, using the methods of the Parents' National Education Union as a basis. It was not long before many of her friends were begging her to let their children join in. Fedtsden, an independent prep. school, was born and put on the Ministry's List; like most prep. schools, its target was Common Entrance, but it grew and grew in all directions—both up and down. When I joined the staff it was already taking boarders and considering building up the senior school as well as adding a nursery block. Twice it moved its location in quick succession, first to an old country house in Royden, with temporary classrooms in the grounds, then to Parndon Hall, an historic mansion in Harlow, with Kingsmoor House for boarding.

At that time we were a happy experimental school. We had many foreign pupils, including coloured girls sent by their Embassies, as well as girls 'in care' sent by London and Middlesex Councils, and girls from insecure, broken homes—girls with

personality problems. All working without any form of prejudice with girls from professional and other middle class homes, who formed the core of our pupils, and who had been our first intake.

Mrs Clare is a keen mathematician who began 'new maths' experimentally with our girls before this method of taking 'hate' out of maths became general practice, and she encouraged every member of her staff to try experiments with their own subjects. It was during these years that I discovered how simple it is for a teacher who has a good relationship with her pupils to give sex instruction without the slightest embarrassment either to herself or to them.

The girls took all the usual examinations and, because the classes were very small, they had many successes, especially with entrance to well-known public schools. Within reason the staff could have anything they asked for: tape recorders, television, radio equipment, practical rooms for art, science, cookery and needlework, equipment for tennis, riding, swimming—anything which would make the girls happy and well adjusted. I see the results of those early days week after week in the form of university successes, letters from girls holding down responsible jobs in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Lagos, or from girls taking journeys of adventure to remote parts of the world.

There is a limit to the capacity of even the largest country house and after some years the pressure on our nursery and junior block, where we also took little boys, became very heavy, especially for day pupils. Moreover the growth of Harlow New Town all around us, and the Princess Alexandra Hospital on our door-step, made nonsense of our old description, 'A boarding school in the country for girls and small boys'. Something had to go, so we let the senior side of the school work itself out and developed the nursery and junior side. In Harlow, where there is no provision for nursery education but where there is a great demand, since most mothers work, Fedsden Nursery has proved very popular.

But Kingsmoor, our boarding school, is not going to be a deserted mansion. It is beginning a new life, and a very interesting one, transformed into a Mothers' and Babies' Home where unmarried mothers can live and go to work in the town or finish the studies their pregnancies have interrupted, whilst their babies can be cared for in the nursery. I am very happy to be

a member of the governing body, for it dove-tails very neatly with other work I am doing in the town.

I have had a long and very happy association with Fedsden for more than twenty years, at first as a full-time member of staff, and after a break of three years as coach to fifth and sixth form girls.

The break came in a strange and totally unexpected way. Among my very few friends in the constituency Tory Party was Johnny Johnson, who lived at North Weald and had a wood-working factory in North London—a family business which had started out with that old-fashioned toy, 'a monkey up a stick'. He was the most persistent but good-humoured heckler I have ever known and could always be relied upon to liven up a meeting. I met his good humour with good humour, so after a meeting he always took me to the Old Thatched in Epping for a drink and a free-for-all discussion in the bar.

At the time of the Suez crisis I was in the Chair at a large and surprisingly orderly meeting in the Market Square at Harlow. There were cheers, and plenty of 'Hear, hears', but I would have welcomed a little opposition. None came. Then in the crowd I noticed Johnny. Surely he would defend his pal Anthony Eden! Still nothing. When I climbed down from the rostrum, he made his way to the front of the crowd. "Come and have a drink with me," he said. "I've been thinking over a proposition, but not been quite sure whether to make it." I expect I looked as startled as I felt. One does not expect to be propositioned after a political meeting. He added hastily, "It's a business idea. I've been turning it over in my mind for some time and, after the way you've handled this meeting, I'm quite sure my idea would work out. I expect you've heard I've taken a large factory in Harlow and I'm bringing most of my people from Walthamstow to work here. Those who don't want to live here will get transport to and from the New Town and London. We shall need to expand our labour force very quickly, applications are pouring in but I've formed the opinion that many of these people are more interested in being rehoused than in working for J.B.'s. The whole thing wants sorting out, and needs sound judgment in experience and personality brought to bear on the problem. As you know, our business has always been an old-fashioned family affair—no labour troubles; and I view with some

apprehension this mixture of the old and the new—one must find the best way to blend them together. I've thought and thought and my mind always comes back to you—no one better than Leah Manning. Quite honestly you understand these working-class chaps; they will trust you."

Before I could get a word in, he continued, "I'll make you a Director, but with some specific duties, perhaps 'economic adviser': the kind of job Wilson's got with one of the timber firms, keeping in touch with government departments for our export trade, seeing that we get our supplies, and supervising the whole gamut of labour relations. You know the trade union world and we may need your help in that direction too."

He looked at me anxiously. I could see he had set his heart on the project and, because I was so quiet, thought I was going to refuse. He mentioned a salary and expenses—a bait. But it wasn't the salary that made the proposition attractive to me. I knew nothing about the inside of a factory, except what I had seen when, during the war, I had given a series of pep talks to women munition workers. Here was an opportunity to see what happened on both sides of the fence, the factory floor and the board room—not only an opportunity, but a challenge, something I could never resist.

As soon as I smiled, Johnny's whole personality lighted up with relief. I said, "I shall have to play it by ear, you know." That was a Saturday and I started work on the Monday. It was the end of term and I had for some time been trying to find a place on our staff for a young married woman who had just come to live in Harlow. I killed two birds with one stone and didn't feel I had let Fedsden down by my unpremeditated departure.

Notices had appeared on the factory walls, telling the men about my appointment, and I asked for a meeting of all employees during the morning break, so that I could explain to them the implications of my post.

I thought the term 'economic adviser' made little impact, and suggested a change to 'Personnel Manager', a blanket designation that did not indicate I was there just to 'hire and fire'. I explained the kind of work Mr Johnson had in mind and said that I knew my way round government departments well enough to find no difficulties there, but that I should always regard my first and most important duty to act as liaison between the factory floor and the board room. I hoped to give the fullest con-

sideration to staff welfare and should be available at all times to shop stewards, indeed to any employee who had a difficulty or personal grievance—I did not realise what I was letting myself in for; I was soon welfare officer, education officer and family affairs adviser as well.

At that time my name was so well-known in labour and trade union circles that my appointment was welcomed by all the men, newcomers and old-timers as well. I soon found myself much more at home on the factory floor than in the board room. I set up a consultative committee, fought the board to build a decent canteen for the men instead of leaving them to eat out of paper bags at their benches, obtained day-time release for the apprentices and finally won the men round to a weekly target of output. Perhaps this might not have been accepted so happily if I had not explained what I had seen in a Russian factory and how the idea worked out there.

Our products were radio, radiogram and television cases, and most of the work in the three shops, the machine shop, the 'makers' and the French polishing shops, was highly skilled. While the economy was buoyant, the demand for our work steadily expanded. Soon I had doubled the number of employees, set up a women's department on semi-skilled operations and then begun a night shift. Often I returned to the factory at ten o'clock at night to see that things were going happily for the night shift. It was hard but exciting work.

After the first year, Johnny wanted to increase my salary. I cannot be quite sure why I refused his munificence; but in spite of my happy relationship with the men, there were many things which made me slightly uncomfortable. When one is outside industry, the question of expense accounts may arouse some cynicism, but it is not a matter of any real concern, except I suppose to the tax man. New to the job, I found it difficult to decide what expenses were legitimate. I used my own car. Should I get it filled and serviced at a local garage and charged to the firm? Should I claim for my lunch and drinks at a local country club? I solved that problem by having it on a tray from the canteen in my office at a convenient time to interview employees. When this innocent abroad asked the advice of fellow directors, I only caused amusement. I could keep out of expenses high, wide and handsome myself, but when the next year my political nose told me that the boom was coming to an end, I began to

feel there were other expenses which were not legitimate and, for the sake of economy in the firm's affairs, might well be cut.

I particularly disapproved of paying golf club fees on the assumption that the only place to effect sales was on a golf course. I intended to bring up the whole question of expenses at the next board meeting. I saw Mr Johnson just before he went into hospital and told him he was leaving too much to the directors, and that the men were disappointed he had not taken the same personal interest in the firm as he had done when they were at Walthamstow. But he was too ill by then to take in what I was saying. He died soon after, and no board meeting was called.

I was right. The boom was coming to an end. I had always known the firm was under-capitalised and I did not see how it was going to take the strain, for I realised that our product was highly vulnerable to any 'stop' policy of the Tory Government. The men who were politically minded saw it as well, and we began to lay plans that would ease the situation for them. Long consultations with their trade union officials and shop stewards followed: cut the night shift; short time if things became worse; and last of all, if redundancy became necessary, last in first out. As personnel manager, I considered this my province.

The busy, humming factory was grinding to a halt. The freeze hit us very hard. Nothing moved in the retail shops; nothing moved in the factory—all stocks were frozen in the pipe-line. Even our loading bays were full, and our transport packed with our lovely workmanship was stuck. I thought, 'I've been here before'—my mind flew back to the frozen silence of the thirties and the Sunderland shipyards: no clang of hammers on steel; grass growing where Geordie feet had once tramped back and forth. I saw again small mining villages in South Wales. I had preached in their chapels, spoken in their halls, and to men sitting on their hunkers at the street corners; and now, within a factory I had helped to prosper, there was no sound of machinery or tools, no hum of human voices. A small unimportant factory in a New Town—the frozen silence of unemployment. I hate and fear it. We closed down.

I returned at once to Fedsden. Say what one will, there is no more rewarding work than teaching. A quarter of an ounce of added weight on a T.B. child in my open air school, or a string of G.C.E. successes, all amount to the same thing: deep

and lasting content with one's work. Lasting, because it does not end in the form room when one can follow the girls on through their after careers. Long affectionate letters came frequently; and later bits of wedding cake, slips of cardboard as the babies begin to arrive, appeals for help and advice from some girl who has slipped up. Appreciative letters are received from parents, and gracious references to one's work appear in H.M.I.'s reports. It all adds up to the best kind of success.

Yet not quite enough. One must still go forward to answer some other challenge.

VII

Sixty Years in the Service of Education

I SUPPOSE NO more evocative phrase was ever coined than the slogan which followed the First World War: 'Homes Fit for Heroes'. But for teachers and many parents there was the fuller promise of a better chance for their children, better school buildings, smaller classes, a longer school life. After both wars such hopes were enshrined in Education Acts—the Fisher Act of 1918 and the Butler Act of 1944.

I have had a close association with two of these Acts, and even a remote association with the Act of 1870 when my grandfather refused to pay rates that went to the support of Church Schools. The 1918 Act, which was pioneered by H. A. L. Fisher, one of our very few great Ministers of Education, promised much more than it was able to achieve: an increase in secondary education, for able boys and girls, over what had been offered by the limited scope of the 1902 Act; nursery education for the pre-school child; and part-time education for school leavers (the Day Continuation School clauses). But the appointed day for the operation of these promises never came. It was left to voluntary effort to prove that they were a necessary part of our children's education. We can be grateful to Margaret Macmillan and Lady Astor for keeping alive the ideal of the nursery school, and to firms like Boots', Cadbury's and Clark's, who put into operation their own day continuation schools and showed, beyond doubt, that such schemes benefited not only adolescent boys and girls, but also the firms employing them.

One real reform was achieved by the 1918 Act: the ending of the 'half-time' system. Mr R. Waddington, one of the great past presidents of the N.U.T., often described as the Wilberforce of the North, had worked unceasingly for these little human slaves of whom there were 100,000 working in the mills of

Lancashire and Yorkshire. At the age of eleven, they finished full-time schooling and worked half-time in the mills, their young lungs filled with the dust and fluff of their product, which led to many a premature death. Mr. Waddington was President in 1899. It took another twenty years to end this iniquitous system, in the face of bitter hostility from industrialists who used this child labour, from angry parents and from Tory Members of Parliament.

The fight for reform went on a long time and, as a member of the Labour Party's Advisory Committee on Education, one of the first tasks I undertook after my illness of 1920 was a series of meetings in Lancashire to explain and popularise the new Act. It was a tough campaign. Often I was shouted down by angry parents who could ill afford the loss of their children's meagre earnings. There was so much poverty in the days following the war that their reaction was one I could understand and sympathise with. However, I had nothing but contempt for the angry mill owner, and his bitter recriminations that without the nimble fingers of these little children the cotton industry would be ruined. As I sat in the gallery of the House of Commons, listening to debates on the Bill, I felt the first faint stirrings of a belief that it was on the floor of the House, rather than on the public platform, that I should be fighting for the ideals I had held ever since I was a schoolgirl. It was not entirely my own fault that this proved to be a mistake.

The Butler Act of 1944 marked a great step forward, nevertheless it contained the seeds of more controversy than any of its predecessors. It is unfortunate that so few Ministers of Education have been really interested in their work, except as a stepping stone to promotion. I can remember only four such dedicated men: H. A. L. Fisher, Lord Eustace Percy, Mr G. Tomlinson and Sir Edward Boyle. If Butler had understood the educational process, the schools, the children and the teachers, he could easily have avoided some of the traps into which his Act led the administrative machine.

The great step forward was to make all education over the age of eleven, secondary and free. The trap, to suggest that every child over the age of eleven should be given the type of education best suited to his ability—modern, technical or

grammar. No true educationist could have dreamed up the idea that at the age of eleven it is possible to decide, by any means whatever, the kind of education suited to a child's ability.

There is in fact no specific mention in the Act that selection at eleven plus is to be determined by an examination on one catastrophic day in a child's life. But it led to the eleven plus examination which was devised by the L.E.A.s to simplify the process of selection. This examination was always opposed by teachers, and has caused bitter resentment in parents who never abandoned the hope of finding a place in grammar schools of good repute for their children of high academic ability. The view, so firmly rooted in some minds, that parents who want their children to go to grammar schools are middle class snobs, is not only irrelevant to the issue, but quite wrongly conceived—like the utterance of Mr Wedgwood Benn, who attacked public schools as “fast becoming a waste of public money.” This is to assert that parents have no rights in the education of their children—true enough in the days when the State stood between them and the meagre earnings of their sons and daughters. The State was then the protector of the child. Now parents only feel frustrated by the attitude, ‘Whitehall knows best’.

This is not to say that I accept the current practice of denigrating the modern secondary school. The great majority of such schools have done a first class job and fulfilled the promise we had of them in 1944—to give a chance to the boy and girl of non-academic ability. I have had the pleasure of speaking at the annual speech day of many such schools and have always come away impressed and encouraged by the pride the pupils and their parents have in their school, and the anxiety of the staffs to give their pupils every opportunity to fulfil themselves whether in ‘extended courses’ or in valuable training for good citizenship and parenthood.

The attempt to smooth out all the difficulties and anomalies of the 1944 Act by a universal system of comprehensives has not been entirely successful. The case for such schools, on egalitarian and philosophic grounds, is unacceptable to many parents and L.E.A.s. These schools must in the first place be educationally excellent, as many of them are; but, in common with small grammar schools, they have certain defects which can only be

put right by a complete overhaul of the age structure of the present system.

However much we may admire our secondary schools, whether modern, comprehensive or grammar, the time has now arrived when we must take a close look at the structure of the system. Nothing stands still. The maturity of the young adolescent is quite different from what it was in pre-war days; so are the demands of society. As I write, a new education act is in process of formulation, and the time is relevant to make the necessary changes.

The age-range of nearly all secondary schools begins at eleven and may end at fifteen, sixteen, seventeen or eighteen. There is no uniformity. The long age-range to be found in the grammar streams of comprehensives and in most grammar schools is not a sound idea. Youngsters of eleven, emerging from primary school, and to whom the usual school disciplines still apply, are not compatible with the young person of seventeen or eighteen who is now an adult and has the right to be treated as such. Some L.E.A.s have already broken away from the old standards; most of the current education reports recommend a change, and in many areas the young people have taken matters into their own hands and left the all-through comprehensive to go to a college of further education.

But a more serious defect in the present system is the lack of facilities for sixth form work in all comprehensives and some small grammar schools. Figures offered by the Schools Council in its researches on sixth form curriculum are revealing. In a grammar school of 595 pupils, 144 boys were taking, between them, 18½ subjects; in a comprehensive school of 1,152 boys, 32 were pursuing A Level courses of only 7 subjects. In another large grammar school 250 boys in the Sixth were offered a choice of 22 subjects. Any reputable sixth form must offer 17-20 A Level subjects, but without a large enough number of pupils in the Sixth, the staffing required would be absurdly uneconomic. The protagonists of comprehensives say, "End the grammar schools, and the comprehensives would at once become efficient." This is an illusion. It leaves out of account the demands of the boys and girls in the non-academic streams, which would be difficult to meet in schools of such gargantuan size as to provide a sixth form of 200 pupils all doing A Level work.

The suggestions which I shall make for sixth form colleges are not meant to apply to grammar or direct grant schools which can offer an appropriate number of A Level courses. Where the ethos of a school is good and its educational aims high, destruction for the sake of unproved dogmas is pure philistinism.

There is only one way, as I see it, to mend this situation and that is by the provision of sixth form colleges. This can only be brought about by a change in the age structure of the present system. I do not think the suggestions of the Plowden Report in this respect meet the case. There are two essentials. The infant and junior schools, whether separate or combined departments, should have a long enough span of life to give the children the tools of learning and engage their interest in a wide range of subjects, including art, music, sport and adventure; the secondary school should enable its pupils to take either O Levels in the General Certificate of Education, or the Secondary Certificate of Education, whichever is appropriate to their ability, while furthering and helping their development from adolescence into the growing maturity of the young adult.

As we must include the pre-school child in the general review I would suggest :

The nursery school : ages 3-5.

The infant school : ages 5-8.

The junior school : ages 8-12.

The secondary school : ages 12-16, with only one leaving date.

I think the most difficult, perhaps the most rewarding stage in these age groups will be the twelve to sixteen age group. It will need all our ingenuity and sympathy and best teaching techniques to overcome the reluctance of some young people to stay at school until the age of sixteen. There will be less difficulty with pupils taking G.C.E. O Levels; and C.S.E. offers refreshing opportunities for project work with the less academic. But sixteen-year-olds often have a compulsive desire to be out in the world, earning money, and we must not forget that now and again we may be faced with young people who are actually married.

One hopes that suggestions for sixth form colleges will not

meet with hostility from our grammar school colleagues. There is no reason why there should not be exchanges of staff, between grammar schools and sixth form colleges. It might indeed be a refreshing experience for a teacher, however dedicated to his subject, to make just such a break.

I would like to feel that the sixth form colleges were really comprehensive in character. That they would embrace not only people taking A Level courses but would end the anomalies arising from different regulations for young people who are regarded as taking courses in further education. So we might have in a sixth form college people from the grammar schools and comprehensives taking A Levels; and also people taking National Certificate, or sandwich courses, or even the preliminary examinations leading to professional careers of one kind or another. Above all I would like to see compulsory part-time education through day release for everyone up to the age of eighteen. This would end, once and for all, the broken promises of the 1918 and 1944 Acts.

One of the difficulties which A Level boys and girls seeking a place in university face every year is that the results of the present A Level examinations are known only a few weeks before the start of the university term. Failures, or people with low grades, may have to switch rapidly from planning a university career to finding a job, or deciding to take their A Levels again. 1970 is a time of great anxiety, not only for young people but for their parents. The proposals of the committee which has been considering this problem, under the chairmanship of Professor Charles Butler of Imperial College, London, is that the A Level should be replaced by a less exacting I (Intermediate) examination and that pupils studying for this need not take O Level at fifteen or sixteen. I Level would consist of five subjects, with a wide choice for three of them, whilst English, mathematics or some other science subject would be compulsory.

There are two probable points of view about these proposals. Many will welcome a change of system, already in use in Scottish universities, which gives the all-rounder a broad choice of four or five subjects, instead of the narrow and early specialisation demanded by A Level courses.

But because the I Level looks like a soft option it may meet with strong opposition from sixth forms and universities. The university explosion following the Robbins Report has led to a

fight to keep university entrance high, but it has also meant that, to avoid narrow specialisation, some universities have found it necessary to introduce courses of general studies to counter the semi-literacy which they find among brilliant science and mathematics students.

I think the report makes a mistake in suggesting that pupils studying for I Level examinations should not take their O Levels. Boys and girls of fourteen or fifteen are not ready to make up their minds about their future studies. The decision whether to take I or A Level, should be taken after O Level. This has the further advantage that it would not derange the work of the secondary schools, especially where pupils go on later to a sixth form college. These schools need a goal towards which to work, and O Levels would seem the appropriate aim.

Since all my experience has been in State and Independent schools with pupils up to A Level, I am not qualified to express an opinion about the differences which have arisen between the student body and the governing bodies of universities, although there is an obvious place for some form of student participation in sixth form colleges, universities, colleges of education and major technical colleges. I would like to make only one comment. It is to oppose the suggestion now being made in some quarters that to meet the ever-increasing cost of a place at such institutions of learning, residential provision should be substantially reduced, and a much higher proportion of students should be day students living at home and going back and forwards to their colleges daily—an extension in fact of school life.

Much depends on how one looks at the function of (particularly) a university. Is it a piece of social engineering designed to secure qualifications which will be of use to the state? This is the argument behind the suggestion, and as the country needs expertise in every kind of science and technology, and is paying for such training, it has a spurious appeal. Or is a university a place of learning where, for three or four years, young men and women can, as Matthew Arnold put it, "acquaint themselves with the best that has been written and known and said in the world, and thus with the history of the human spirit"? Is it not also a place where for three or four years the student may learn to live; be given a time for the exploration of exciting possibilities, for making friends with others from different kinds of homes, with different philosophies and religions and of different race? Per-

haps forty years of living in Cambridge and knowing many generations of students may have biased my views!

When my old friend Stewart Headlam walked into the classroom where I was rehearsing a part in the annual school play, he was a member of the old London School Board. There were hundreds of such boards up and down the country, administering the schools in their areas, often, especially in London, with devoted care and dedication to the cause of education. The Act of 1902 which put an end to the School Boards caused much heart-ache, but it was necessary if the education authorities were to have sufficient financial resources to administer the growing service.

They were replaced by two types of authority: Part II authorities which served both secondary and elementary education, and Part III authorities, whose powers were limited to elementary schools. Just as the old School Boards did good work within their limited scope, so did these new Part III Authorities, and their extinction under the 1944 Act was a matter of great regret to many who were in touch with their work in the old elementary schools (up to the age of fourteen, before Hadow paved the way to the 1944 Act).

But the pattern of the new system made the change inevitable. Under the 1944 Act, all education over the age of eleven was secondary education, so that L.E.A.s now supervised the whole range of education service, primary and secondary. The number of L.E.A.s was reduced by nearly 200, and administration was brought under the control of the County and County Borough Education Committees.

Where a County Hall seemed too remote from the schools, new forms of administration, with practically no power and of very little use, were introduced in certain parts of some counties: the Divisional Executives. These, together with 'delegated powers', will now go into the limbo of things forgotten and not regretted.

Even if the new Act, which one hopes will cover the whole range of education from nursery school to the sixth form college, does not make a further reduction in the number of Education Authorities necessary, the Report of the Maud Commission would have made it inevitable. One can only hope that the

implementation of this important new Local Government Report will coincide with the passing of the new Education Act. Whilst one can, presumably, botch up the redefinition of Parliamentary boundaries, the new Regional Educational Authorities, which may cover populations of a quarter of a million, must be settled before the new Act comes into force. I do not carry a crystal ball so cannot foresee who is going to win in the struggle between a two-tier system and a regional authority with full powers. I am all in favour of regionalism (not only in education). Such an authority would have great financial resources and be able to command the services of men and women of the very highest ability serving in the field of education. When one considers the salaries paid by the Government to the chairmen of its nationalised boards, there seems no reason why Directors of Education, with their far greater responsibilities, should not have commensurate salaries.

If it was felt that County Hall was sometimes too remote, and Divisional Executives were needed to bridge the gap, some new way could be found to bring the regional authority into purposeful contact with the schools. Whether groups of school governors with adequate powers, as suggested by Sir William Alexander, one of the foremost educationists of today, will meet the situation, I am not sure; but it seems the only suggestion yet put forward that is worth pursuing.

The Secretary of State at the Ministry of Education and Science, the Director of Education with his administrative staff at regional level, buildings and equipment, are the apparatus of the system, but they are not education. Education is what takes place in the classroom between teacher and pupil. Where it is good and communication between them is well established, it may achieve the framework of character which becomes the directive for the child's future life and instils in him a love of learning which lasts.

It is at this point that a hectic but wholesome dialogue is now taking place between those who believe in certain necessary disciplines in the learning process and those who believe that such disciplines stifle all initiative and creativeness in the child. I am not disposed to anathematize that backlash against new methods contained in the 'Black Papers'. They show at least a kernel of

truth and are no greater an exaggeration than the utterance of Professor Morris Lewis who declares :

Children should not be nagged about bad spelling and grammar in case it stops them wanting to write at all. Children tend to be slowed or even frustrated if they have to give thought to grammar, spelling, punctuation, legibility and neatness. Too much correction is worse than useless.

New mathematics takes the hate out of a subject most of us dreaded, because it made no sense to us; a project at which a child can work contentedly hour after hour without supervision can give him a sense of achievement—it rather depends on the child—until the moment comes when the fun has to be controlled. There is no need to nag; but help, supervision and discipline must begin somewhere. If children are to go on forever allowing 'spelin to brek the rolls', then that is the way that 'spel-in', 'brek' and 'rools' will be for a long time implanted in a child's mind. This is especially important since the current habit of the young is to get its information visually, through television, comics and newspaper strips, instead of through the written word.

Too much freedom leads to a sense of frustration when the child has to face more formal work in his secondary school. The exciting possibilities of literature, history, geography and other O Level subjects will be a closed door to him if he has no command of the tools with which to open the door.

At the head of every O Level paper is a warning that orderly presentation of material and spelling will be taken into consideration. So the child of even modest ability, who has been encouraged in his 'project researches' to use language correctly, will find himself at an advantage over the child who has been allowed to write screeds of pointless, uncorrected drivel. Teachers in junior schools are not likely to give up the relaxed, child-centred methods of teaching, for there is sufficient proof that if these methods are not carried to excess, accuracy in number, reading and expression are improving. It is equally obvious that far too many children do not learn to read or express themselves in good English, either in the spoken or the written word.

In spite of Professor Morris Lewis, I think most Junior School

teachers will agree with me. They will continue to encourage experiment and new ideas; but they also have consciences.

It is in the classroom as much as in the type of school that the real struggle for egalitarianism begins. The Newsom Report highlighted the disadvantages suffered by children coming from homes where there are no books, no papers, no conversation or communication between parent and child, no order and no discipline. Such a situation places a responsibility on the schools to make good these disadvantages. The literate person speaks correctly, spells more or less correctly and does not break the rules of grammar—and this is what counts when a young person is seeking employment and trying to find his place in society. If egalitarianism is to be more than a word in our mouths we must strive to help him to find these gifts.

The Minister of State is faced with two controversial problems which he must solve in the new act—compulsory religious instruction and compulsory sex instruction in all secondary schools.

Under the 1944 Act, religious instruction and a corporate act of worship at the beginning of every day are compulsory. The religious instruction is supposed to be in accordance with a syllabus agreed by the denominations. I very much doubt if this syllabus, now completely out of date, is much used—at least in secondary schools where the syllabus prescribed for O Level religious knowledge is much more useful and allows the teacher greater flexibility.

Pressure will be brought to bear on the Secretary of State to make changes, and especially to cut out the corporate act of worship. Whatever changes are made in the syllabus, it would be a reactionary step to dispense with morning assembly, the only time in the day when a school realises itself as a community. Such pressure is usually brought by people who know little or nothing about what happens in our schools or how the act of corporate worship is conducted: the school orchestra or band accompanying the hymns, a scholar reading a poem or piece of prose of his own choice, a classical record, some encouraging words from the Head and an orderly dispersal to class. Even in a tiny village school, I have seen a simple morning assembly on the same lines—the orchestra, perhaps no more than recorders and per-

cussion instruments, taking the place of the classical record—but the whole school, from five-year-olds to elevens, a unit.

What shall we teach our children that will give them a secure base on which to build their attitude to life and form their moral judgements? In the past it seemed a simple issue. Our ideas of man's worth and the institutions which governed his life were built on the twin traditions of classical culture and the Judeo-Christian tradition which is found in the Bible. It would be dishonest to pretend that there have been no changes in man's attitudes towards this tradition. The beliefs which have supported him in the past no longer seem relevant in a scientific and technological age, with the impact of two world wars fresh in his memory. Sincere and honest people are asking whether we are right in building our moralities exclusively on Christian ideals. Equally sincere are those who assert that if moral standards are to be maintained in this permissive society it is essential to preserve Christian beliefs.

In spite of the fact that we are almost a pagan country, I believe the majority of parents desire that religious instruction should form part of their children's education. Then what do they mean by religious instruction? Merely a code of conduct is not sufficient. There must also be that which will nourish the spiritual growth of the child and help the adolescent in the complex choices which face him on his way to maturity.

R.I. must look further afield than the loyalties and duties imposed by living in one's own country, to the wider duties of World Citizenship; it must take account of the history and traditions of other beliefs and religions which have guided the conduct of Christendom, those of Africa, India and China; for our children will find much of value and interest in all of them.

Yet it would be a great deprivation to our children if the use of the Bible were denied or seriously curtailed. Its incomparably beautiful English, its unique history of a people reared in the very cradle of civilisation, its tender stories, its heroic figures, its struggles between good and evil forces can be a source of enchantment as well as a help towards spiritual growth. It should not be presented as a dreary 'must' or as 'revealed truth' but as one of the many strands in the growth of European civilisation. It may never become as dear and familiar to the present young people as to those of us who were nurtured

on its truths, but they should not be allowed to grow up in ignorance of those truths.

A syllabus based on such broad lines would surely meet the views of those who consider religious instruction an affront to their intellectual integrity, and who are pressing for its end in state schools.

Much influence has been brought to bear on Ministers of State to make sex instruction compulsory in all state secondary schools. Their replies have invariably been the same: "This is a matter for the Head of the school, but we are publishing a helpful pamphlet." The pamphlet, when it came along, skilfully evaded the point at issue. The time has now come when the Minister must face honestly the importance of providing a sensible health education on sex and the changing attitude of young people towards it. Biology lessons on human reproduction are only the dry bones of the subject. The problems of human relationships and the responsibilities that sex carries with it are of paramount importance. Perhaps girls need more help and advice than boys of the same age. They are more sophisticated and sexually aware, and the results for them are more disastrous if they do not know how to protect themselves. That is why any discussion must cover the question of contraceptives.

Teachers are now asking with some anxiety who is to undertake this important task. Is the instruction to be direct or indirect—in time set apart on the time-table or should it arise spontaneously from teaching history, literature or religious knowledge? Indeed, does not almost any subject afford an opportunity? What is essential is that every child has a right to the basic information and an awareness of some of the psychological and physical dangers that may arise. But any reversion to the idea that we equate sex with sin will speedily end any worthwhile communication between teacher and child.

When it becomes a compulsory part of the curriculum, will teachers really find it so embarrassing to talk to adolescent boys and girls about sex that they will prefer to ask the vicar, the doctor or some marriage guidance counsellor to come into the school to do the work for them? The vicar will not ask me to preach his sermon, although I have no doubt I could; nor the doctor hand over his surgery to me. Then why should people

who are not trained as teachers be asked to undertake a task which we know requires the utmost skill and teaching ability?

But there are other and more fundamental reasons why the problems of growing up should be the privilege and responsibility of the staff. They should not be taught as something 'special' by someone popping in to do the job. They are the very stuff of life and our schools are a preparation for life and all that it may hold in the future.

The problem may be solved in the same way as instruction in religious knowledge has been solved. Among our teaching staffs are atheists, agnostics, humanists, who have the right to opt out of the Christian teaching which is now given in the schools. Equally, many colleges of education offer divinity as a main course for teachers who wish to train for this work. Is it too much to hope that, in future, courses on sociology will train students to give sex instruction? A young teacher who is herself permissive may find the right approach more easily than an older teacher. I have put this question to students who come to my advisory centre and they have always said they would welcome such an opportunity.

VIII

Family Planning

I HAVE ALWAYS tried to add some voluntary work for the community to my professional job. Whilst I was a Member of Parliament this was out of the question—an M.P. can spend all the time out of the House dealing with constituency work—but when I made the decision not to stand again, I began to look round for something I might do in Harlow. I did not have to look long or far.

The families who came to Harlow looking for houses and work were, in the great majority of cases, young married couples. They had nearly all lived in the same kind of unhappy circumstances, one or two furnished rooms or with parents; almost always under the same edict, 'any sign of a baby and out you go'. In London, contraceptive advice had been readily available to them. There were Family Planning Clinics in most areas.

In Harlow bright new houses had to be furnished, and H.P. demanded a heavy percentage of the pay packet. Young wives, who had already suffered the frustration of many childless years since the end of the war, demanded babies, and, always believing the old wives' tale that it is dangerous to start a family after thirty, they were not prepared to wait any longer. With no contraceptive advice available, the babies began to arrive thick and fast. Soon we became known as 'pram town'—in the Stow and other shopping precincts one could not move for prams filled with lovely, gurgling, toothless wonders.

Slightly embarrassed, men in the factory came to ask me the address of a clinic where the wife might go for advice. Bishop's Stortford, some miles away and with shocking transport, was the nearest. A visit meant a whole evening away from home, and often a walk all the way back to Harlow in any kind of weather. There was a simple solution. Now that I had more time, I must start a clinic in Harlow. Many years before, I had worked with Ruth Dalton and Mrs Sargent Florence in the Cambridge

clinic, so I knew the ropes; but first I had to be sure that I could find staff, both lay and professional, and a clinic to work in. With the help of Councillor Mrs Druce we soon had plenty of volunteers, and Dr Brown, our M.O.H., found us premises and gave us help for which we can never be sufficiently grateful.

Only when our plans were matured did we write to the Central Office for a grant and the help of one of their organisers. At first we ran in double harness with Bishop's Stortford, our sister clinic, for we were about to purloin a large number of their clients. They were most generous with money, doctors and advice, and continued their help until we were financially viable. As soon as we were able, we paid back our grant both to them and to Central Office.

During the last fifteen years we have grown beyond the bounds of our most optimistic expectations. We now hold four evening sessions and two day-time sessions in different parts of the town and, over the years, more than fifteen thousand young wives have sought our advice. We have always been in the van in operating new techniques. We were one of the first clinics to be allowed to prescribe 'the pill', now the most popular as well as the safest form of contraception. We began an I.U.D. Session, and are recognised as a training centre for doctors and nurses in Family Planning techniques. Apart from Family Planning advice, we have always taken cervical smears for our own patients, and the advice of our doctors is often sought in sub-fertility and other sexual problems.

Our success has been due to two things: the pressing need that we met, and the continuity of our work and personnel. Our senior doctor, Elizabeth Hill, has been with us since the day we opened, and so have many of our nurses and lay workers. Perhaps to no two people do we owe more than to Mrs Druce, our clinics organiser, and her husband, John Druce, our Treasurer. He has bought our supplies and clinical requirements, judiciously husbanded our resources and invested our money shrewdly.

It had always been our intention to buy our own premises as many of the older clinics have done. This would have been a great advantage, allowing us to be open all day, so that our patients could visit the clinic whilst out shopping, instead of having to make arrangements for baby sitters or wait for husbands coming home from work. But just as we were about to consider

the matter with the Local Authority, a new form of organisation was introduced and the money passed out of our control. However, there now seems a chance that Central Office, which cannot disregard the wishes of so powerful and wealthy a group as Harlow Clinics, will come to our assistance and find us a house. During all these years I was either Chairman or Secretary of Harlow Clinics, but with a new enterprise to nurse to success, I became President of the Herts and Beds Branch of F.P.A., to which Harlow Clinics is affiliated. This gave me much more time than I had available as an officer of Harlow Clinics, and enabled me to turn my attention to another pressing problem, which was also something of a challenge, that of contraception for the unmarried.

Illegitimacy, shot-gun weddings at sixteen leading to divorce at eighteen, and abortions (either in back streets, a terrible danger to life and health, or with costly assistance from Harley Street) had begun to worry me. How could one help young people living in our permissive society to avoid some of the dangers they must encounter? The Family Planning Association had the machine and the techniques if they were willing to use them, and I felt it was their job. After a full discussion at our Harlow Executive in April 1964, we forwarded a resolution to the Annual Conference of F.P.A. asking that permission be given to Local Associations to advise and sell contraceptive supplies to unmarried people. What a furore it caused! I was begged by prominent members of the National Executive to withdraw my resolution if I saw the feeling of the Conference was against me. I refused. A careful canvass had shown me that the exact opposite was likely to be the case. The resolution was stuck away at the end of the agenda, no doubt in the hope that it would not be reached. The late Lord Braine, our President at the time, intervened. He wished it to be taken as first business in Public Session so that the Press might be present. The debate was long and passionate, and no unprejudiced person could have any doubt that the floor was in favour of the resolution. But the platform, terrified that their public image would be smirched and that they would lose the support of the 'unco guid', managed by a procedural sleight of hand to have the resolution defeated.

We had marvellous coverage. Press, radio, television all gave

us interviews and the *News of the World* came up with a proposal that I should write two articles for them on the subject. It was a well-paid bit of journalism and gave me just what I needed—a loan to start a clinic for the unmarried in Harlow, quite independently of F.P.A. I didn't realise that I should have to plough a hard and very lonely furrow indeed. I found it was a project no one could carry alone, so I first set out to find enough responsible people to form a Management Committee. Here I had my first major success. With the help of my own doctor, Herbert Bach, I approached everyone likely to be sympathetic. I did not have a single refusal—clergy, doctors, the chief probation officer, a head teacher, a J.P. and representatives of voluntary and statutory bodies doing social work in the town. Getting down to the practical details was more difficult. In the first place we could find no organisation willing to rent or share with us part of their premises, even when we wanted the rooms at a time when they were not in use either by their owners or anyone else. I am sure the Corporation and the Urban District Council (both of whom gave grants) would have been helpful, but all their premises were in full use. Eventually one of the Community Associations let us have three rooms at a very reasonable rent.

The Press at first proved hostile, coming out with a banner headline, 'A Sex Clinic for Harlow'. When they realised that we did not exist for the sole purpose of selling contraceptives to all and sundry, but that the organisation would be run on sound clinical lines, they became more sympathetic and gave us good publicity.

We held a public meeting to explain the work we wished to do and the compelling reasons which, in our view, made the work necessary. A crowd of elderly persons from the Marriage Guidance Council came along. They proceeded to monopolise the meeting completely with foolish and irrelevant questions and remarks, so that our attempt to explain our work proved quite abortive. I have reason to know that some younger members of their organisation did not find such behaviour acceptable.

It took a lot of time, much faith and generous help from our doctors and nurses to get us off the ground. Gifts of stationery and record cards from the Brook Advisory Centre in London, and of supplies from various contraceptive firms, carried us over the first six months. Much more important than the fact that

we were just ticking over financially, we began to feel ourselves accepted in the town and received invitations to speak on our work at local clubs and meetings.

In the meantime, those who had supported the resolution at the 1964 Conference, were not disposed to let the matter drop. In the two succeeding years, further resolutions were put to Conference, and then it was referred to the N.E.C. to make a decision. They moved at a snail's rate of progress but eventually reached the weighty decision 'that F.P.A. clinics are free to give contraceptive advice to the unmarried'. But it was left an open question: local clinics were free to accept or reject this new permission. It was at this moment that I received a note of congratulation from the Minister, The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Robinson, which certainly set me up in the eyes of some who had been most prejudiced against the Advisory Centre for the Unmarried.

Our original premises were not very convenient for our doctors, so after a successful first year we asked the County Authority if we might have the use of one of the clinics attached to a Health Centre. The response was immediate and generous—five rooms at Chadwick House, with every clinical requirement, heating, lighting and caretaking gratis!

The idea that contraceptive advice to the unmarried would lead to promiscuity would be quickly dispelled if anyone talked seriously to the young people who use the clinic. They are a well-integrated group who know their own minds. If they have doubts or hesitations our doctors are there to help and advise them. In the main, they are well-educated—secretaries, teachers, nurses, students, artists, laboratory assistants and journalists. They have thought through their problem and know that with years of training and poor salaries at the beginning of their careers, marriage for them will be a long way ahead. It is nearly always a joint decision, and the girls come accompanied by their fiancés or steady boy friends. Some of those who came to us in the early days are now married; but they continue to come to Chadwick House, because they like the atmosphere and old friends there.

The views of the Latey Committee accord in detail with our own experience. Young people who will not take the risk of an unwanted baby or an abortion are not promiscuous. If they were, the boys could get all they needed at the barber's shop or from the chemist, without paying a doctor's consultation fee.

That they will come to the clinic and discuss their problem sensibly and responsibly is a sufficient answer to the charges levelled against them and us.

Unhappily our work leaves out of account the boys and girls who *are* promiscuous, and who are responsible for the continuing illegitimacy rate, the growing menace of V.D. and the problems which the Abortion Act have brought in its wake. As with the Family Planning Association, often those who most need help are not willing to take it. At the very heart of the problem is lack of education, not so much in the functions of the human body and the sexual act—most schools give adequate instruction in this during the biology course—but in the matter of personal relationships and personal responsibility.

Fortunately in Richard Crossman there is a Minister who is himself gravely concerned by this problem. He set up a panel of the Health Education Committee, under the chairmanship of Baroness Birk, to consider every aspect of the question and draw up a report. I am a member of this panel and I hope that among other things it will be able to persuade the Minister of State for Education and Science to make sex instruction compulsory in all State Secondary Schools.

For nearly half a century family planning has been carried out by a voluntary organisation. In recent years this has given an excellent example of how a voluntary body can establish a good relationship with a statutory authority—in this case the National Health Service—until the statutory body is ready to take over the responsibility itself, when the time is ripe. In its early history F.P.A. encountered great hostility. It was no easier fifty years ago to open Family Planning clinics, than it is today to establish them for the unmarried. Family Planning was 'not respectable', 'against nature', 'unchristian', 'immoral'.

Perhaps anxiety about the population explosion, the change in the attitude of the Anglican Church, a realisation that an unwanted child has a bad start in life, have contributed to the revolution in thought on the subject. Family Planning is now acceptable to most thinking people. Only the Roman Catholic Church remains adamant—perhaps only the Pope, for we have many Catholic women who come to our clinics following the

advice of liberal minded priests that it is a matter for their own consciences.

Under the National Health (Family Planning) Act the Government has laid the responsibility for administering the Act upon the Local Authority—a responsibility which covers both the married and the unmarried. So the future of F.P.A. is unpredictable. It has a breathing space since most Local Authorities are reluctant, because of the squeeze, to take over the financial responsibility involved. In considering the matter there seem to be two directions in which they are likely to move. Some Authorities with whom I have discussed the matter will make the F.P.A. in their areas their agents to carry out the work, with the financial resources to do so; others may follow the lead given by the Minister, and make Family Planning part of a comprehensive health service.

An authority which is in close relationship with Harlow Clinics has already begun work along these latter lines, using its Maternity and Child Welfare clinics for family planning sessions as well. This I believe is the best direction in which to move. It is more likely to attract the attendance of those whom we fail to reach. Our Health Visitors and Social Welfare workers are in closer touch with the difficult family unit than the voluntary worker in the F.P.A. clinic. In this way the F.P.A. clinics would gradually be phased out, but, as Mr Crossman has said, "Like all good voluntary societies, you are delighted to be made redundant."

My work for family planning has given me great satisfaction and I shall hope to continue it for many more years.

IX

Confrontation

IT'S THE SYSTEM I hate," shouted the young student at the demonstration. I had every sympathy with him. I had said the same when I was a student and had thought I could do something about it. Now when I look back over a long life I find I have been able to achieve nothing of what I had in mind, that things are worse in the world today than when I was eighteen.

It is true that under the Welfare State there are no children dying of malnutrition. But in other parts of the world they daily die from hunger. It is true that thousands of council houses have been built, but thousands still live in slums. I was a pacifist and shouted, "No more war." Since I was eighteen there have been two world wars; there is war today in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and the great powers constantly build weapons that are more and more horrific, with which to destroy civilisation. I do not know how I can still be an optimist, but when I feel a little depressed by this confrontation of my failures, I turn again to my favourite prayer from Michael Quoist's *Prayers of Life* :

The bricklayer laid a brick on the bed of cement.

Then with a precise stroke of his trowel spread another layer.
And without a by-your-leave laid on another brick.

The foundations grew visibly.

The building rose tall and strong to shelter men.

I thought, Lord, of that brick buried in the darkness at the base of the big building.

No one sees it, but it accomplishes its task and the other bricks need it.

Lord, what difference if I am on the roof-top or in the foundation of your building, so long as I stand faithfully in my place.

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